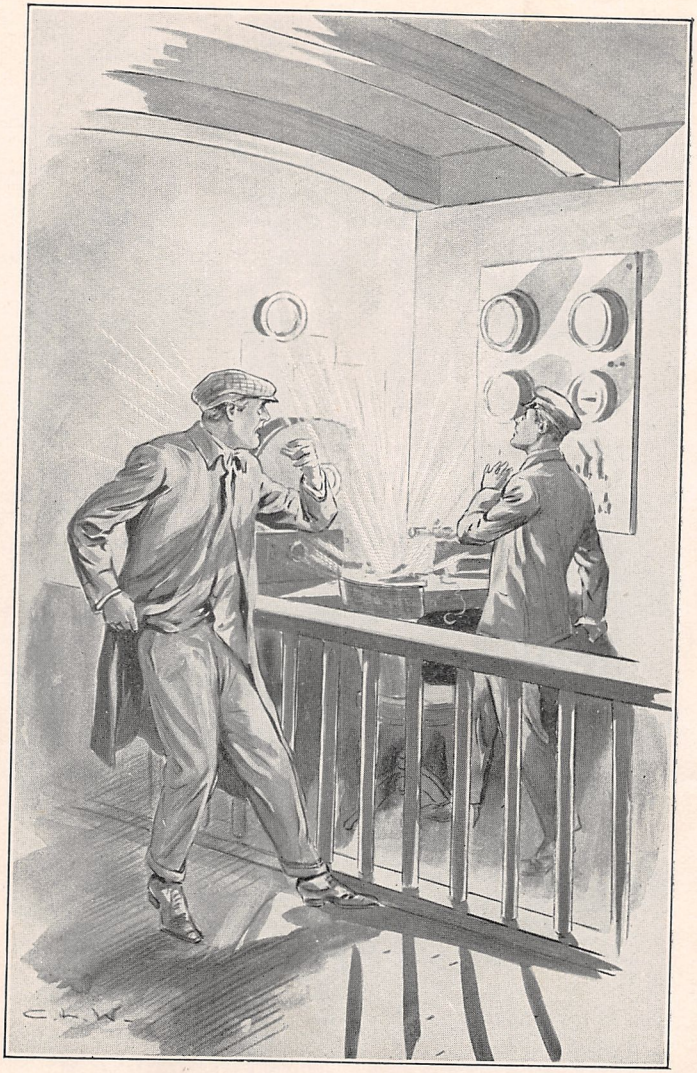
The OCEAN WIRELESS BOYS and the LOST LINER

CAPT. WILBUR LAWTON



There was a sudden blinding flash from the instruments and a blaze of blue, hissing fire filled the room.—*Page* 41

THE OCEAN WIRELESS BOYS AND THE LOST LINER

BY

CAPTAIN WILBUR LAWTON

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The Ocean Wireless Boys and the Lost Liner.

CHAPTER I.

AT SEA ONCE MORE.

The West Indian liner, *Tropic Queen,* one of the great vessels owned by the big shipping combine at whose head was Jacob Jukes, the New York millionaire, was plunging southward through a rolling green sea about two hundred miles to the east of Hatteras. It was evening and the bugle had just sounded for dinner.

The decks were, therefore, deserted; the long rows of lounging chairs were vacant, while the passengers, many of them tourists on pleasure bent, were below in the dining saloon appeasing the keen appetites engendered by the brisk wind that was blowing off shore.

In a small steel structure perched high on the

boat deck, between the two funnels of the *Tropic Queen,* sat a bright-faced lad reading intently a text-book on Wireless Telegraphy. Although not much more than a schoolboy, he was assistant wireless man of the *Queen.* His name was Sam Smalley, and he had obtained his position on the ship—the crack vessel of the West Indies and Panama line—through his chum, Jack Ready, head operator of the craft.

To readers of the first volume of this series, "The Ocean Wireless Boys on the Atlantic," Jack Ready needs no introduction.

Here he comes into the wireless room where his assistant sits reading in front of the gleaming instruments and great coherers. Jack has been off watch, lying down and taking a nap in the small sleeping cabin that, equipped with two berths, opens off the wireless room proper, thus dividing the steel structure into two parts.

"Hello, chief," said Sam Smalley, with a laugh, as Jack appeared; "glad you're going to give me

a chance to get to dinner at last. I'm so hungry I could eat a coherer."

"Skip along then," grinned Jack; "but it's nothing unusual for you to be hungry. I'll hold down the job till you get through, but leave something for me."

"I'll try to," chuckled Sam, as he hurried down the steep flight of steps leading from the wireless station up on the boat deck to the main saloon.

"Well, this is certainly a different berth from the one I had on the old *Ajax,*" mused Jack, as he looked about him at the well-equipped wireless room; "still, somehow, I like to look back at those days. But yet this is a long step ahead for me. Chief wireless operator of the *Tropic Queen!* Lucky for me that the uncle of the fellow who held down the job before me left him all that money. Otherwise I might have been booked for another cruise on the *Ajax,* although Mr. Jukes promised to give me as rapid promotion as he could."

Readers of the first volume, dealing with Jack Ready and his friends, will recall how he lived in a queer, floating home with his uncle, Cap'n Toby. They will also recollect that Jack, who had studied wireless day and night, was coming home late one afternoon, despondent from a fruitless hunt for a job, when he was enabled to save the little daughter of Mr. Jukes from drowning. The millionaire's gratitude was deep, and Jack could have had anything he wanted from him.

All he asked, though, was a chance to demonstrate his ability as a wireless man on the *Ajax*, a big oil tanker which had just been equipped with such an outfit. He got the job, and then followed many stirring adventures. He took part in a great rescue at sea, and was able to frustrate the schemes of some tobacco smugglers who formed part of the crew of the "tanker." This task, however, exposed him to grave danger and almost resulted in his death.

At sea once more, after the smugglers had been apprehended and locked up, Jack's keen wireless sense enabled him to solve a problem in surgery. The *Ajax* carried no doctor, and when one of the men in the fireroom was injured, and it appeared that a limb would have to be amputated, a serious question confronted the captain, who, like most of his class, possessed a little knowledge of surgery, but not enough to perform an operation that required so much skill.

The injured man was a chum of Jack's, and he did not want to see him lose a limb if it could be helped, or have his life imperiled by unskillful methods. Yet what was he to do? Finally an idea struck him. He knew that the big passenger liners all carried doctors. He raised one by means of the wireless and explained the case. The injured man was carried into the wireless cabin and laid close to the table. Then, while the liner's doctor flung instructions through space, Jack translated them to the captain. The result was

that the man was soon out of danger, but Jack kept in touch with doctors of other liners till everything was all right beyond the shadow of a doubt.

This feat gained him no little commendation from his captain and the owners. Next he was instrumental in saving Mr. Jukes' yacht which was on fire at sea. In the panic Mr. Jukes' son Tom, who was the apple of the ship-owning millionaire's eye, was lost. By means of wireless, Jack located him and reunited father and son.

His promotion was the result, when the regular operator of the *Tropic Queen* went west to receive a big legacy left him. As the services of the retiring operator's assistant had been unsatisfactory, Jack was asked to find a successor to him. He selected an old school chum, Sam Smalley, who had owned and operated a small station in Brooklyn and was an expert in theory and practice. The ship had now been at sea two days,

and Sam had shown that he was quite capable of the duties of his new job.

An old quartermaster passed the door of the wireless cabin. He poked his head in.

"Goot efenings, Yack," he said, with easy familiarity. "How iss der birdt cage vurking?"

This was Quartermaster Schultz's term for the tenuous aërials swung far aloft to catch wide-flung, whispered space messages and relay them to the operator's listening ears.

"The bird cage is all right," laughed Jack. "Dandy weather, eh?"

The old man, weather-beaten and bronzed by the storms and burning suns of the seven seas, shook his head.

"Idt is nice now, all righdt," he said, "but you ought to see der glass."

"The barometer? What is the matter with it?"

"Py gollys, I dink der bottom drop oudt off

idt. You may have vurk aheadt of you to-night."

"You mean that we are in for a big storm?"

"I sure do dot same. Undt ven it comes idt be a lollerpaloozitz. Take my vurd for dat. Hark!"

The old quartermaster held up a finger.

Far above him in the aërials could be heard a sound like the moaning bass string of a violin as the wind swept among the copper wires.

"Dot's der langwitch of Davy Chones," declared Schultz. "Idt says, 'Look oudt. Someding didding.' I'fe heardt idt pefore, undt I know."

The old man hurried off on his way forward, and Jack emitted a long whistle.

"My, won't there be a lot of seasick passengers aboard to-night! The company will save money on breakfast to-morrow."

Just then Sam came back from dinner and Jack was free to go below to his meal. He was about

to relinquish the instruments when there came a sudden call.

"To all ships within three hundred miles of Hatteras: Watch out for storm of hurricane violence. BRIGGS,

"Operator Neptune Beach U. S. Wireless Service."

CHAPTER II.

WIRELESS CONVERSATIONS.

Sam was looking over Jack's shoulder as the young wireless chief of the *Tropic Queen* rapidly transcribed the message on a blank.

"Phew! Trouble on the way, eh?" he asked.

"Looks like it. But we need not worry, with a craft like this under our feet."

But Sam looked apprehensive.

"What is the trouble? Not scared, are you?" asked Jack, who knew that, excellent operator though he had shown himself to be, this was Sam's first deep-sea voyage.

"N-no. Not that," hesitated Sam, "but seasickness, you know. And I ate an awful big dinner."

"Well, don't bother about that now. Lots of fellows who have never been to sea before don't get sick."

"I hope that will be my case," Sam replied, without much assurance in his voice.

"Here, take this to the captain; hurry it along now," said Jack, handing him the dispatch. "I guess he'll be interested. Wait a minute," he added suddenly. "There's the *Tennyson* of the Lamport & Holt line talking to the *Dorothea* of the United Fruit, and the battleship *Iowa* is cutting in. All talking weather."

It was true. From ship to ship, borne on soundless waves, the news was being eagerly discussed.

"Big storm on the way," announced the *Tennyson.*

"We should worry," came flippantly through the ether from the *Dorothea.*

"You little fellows better take in your skysails and furl your funnels; you'll be blown about like chicken feathers in a gale of wind," came majestically from Uncle Sam's big warship.

Then the air was filled with a clamor for more news from the Neptune Beach operator.

"You fellows give me a pain," he flashed out, depressing and releasing his key snappily. "I've sent out all I can. Don't you think I know my job?"

"Let us know at once when you get anything more," came commandingly from the battleship.

"Oh, you *Iowa,* boss of the job, aren't you?" remarked the flippant *Dorothea.*

"M-M-M!" (laughter) in the wireless man's code came from all the others, Jack included. The air was vibrant with silent chuckles.

"Say, you fellows, what is going on?" came a fresh voice. Oh, yes, every wireless operator has a "voice." No two men in the world send alike.

"Hello, who are you?" snapped out Neptune Beach.

"*British King,* of the King Line, Liverpool for Philadelphia. Let us in on this, will you? What you got?"

"Big storm. Affect all vessels within three hundred miles of Hatteras. This is Neptune Beach."

"Thanks, old chap. Won't bother us, don't you know," came back from the *British King,* whose operator was English. "Kind regards to you fellows. Hope you don't get too jolly well bunged up if it hits you."

"Thanks, Johnny Bull," from the *Dorothea.* "I reckon we can stand anything your old steam tea-kettle can."

The wireless chat ceased. Sam hastened forward to the sacred precincts of the captain's cabin, while Jack went below to his belated dinner. As he went he noticed that the sea was beginning to heave as the dusk settled down, and the ship was plunging heavily. The wind, too, was rising. The social hall was brilliantly lighted. From within came strains of music from the ship's orchestra. Through the ports, as he passed along to the saloon companionway, Jack

could see men and women in evening clothes, and could catch snatches of gay conversation and laughter.

"Humph," he thought, "if you'd just heard what I have, a whole lot of you would be getting the doctor to fix you up seasick remedies."

In the meantime Sam, cap in hand, presented the message to the captain. The great man took it and read it attentively.

"This isn't a surprise to me," said Captain McDonald, "the glass has been falling since mid-afternoon. Stand by your instruments, lad, and let me know everything of importance that you catch."

"Very well, sir." Sam, who stood in great awe of the captain, touched his cap and hastened back. He adjusted his "ear muffs," but could catch no floating message. The air was silent. He sent a call for Neptune Beach, but the operator there told him indignantly not to plague him with questions.

"I'll send out anything new when I get it," he said. "Gimme a chance to eat. I'm no weather prophet, anyhow. I only relay reports from the government sharps, and they're wrong half the time. Crack!"

Sam could sense the big spark that crashed across the instruments at Neptune Beach as the indignant and hungry operator there, harassed by half a dozen ships for more news, smashed down his sending key.

CHAPTER III.

A STRANGE REQUEST.

When Jack came on deck again, he thought to himself that it was entirely likely that the warning sent through space from Neptune Beach would be verified to the full by midnight. The merriment in the saloon appeared to be much subdued. The crowd had thinned out perceptibly and hardly anybody was dancing.

The ship was rolling and plunging like a porpoise in great swells that ran alongside like mountains of green water. Although it was dark by this time, the gleam of the lights from the brilliantly illuminated decks and saloon showed the white tops of the billows racing by.

Just as Jack passed the door leading from the social hall to the deck, a masculine figure emerged. At the same instant, with a shudder-

ing, sidelong motion, the *Tropic Queen* slid down the side of a big sea. The man who had just come on deck lost his balance and went staggering toward the rail. The young wireless man caught and steadied him.

In the light that streamed from the door that the man had neglected to close, Jack saw that he was a thickset personage of about forty, black-haired and blue-chinned, with an aggressive cast of countenance.

"What the dickens——" he began angrily, and then broke off short.

"Oh! It's you, is it? The wireless man?"

"The same," assented Jack.

"Well, this is luck. I was on my way up to your station. On the boat deck, I believe it is. This will save me trouble."

The man's manner was patronizing and offensive. Jack felt his pride bridling, but fought the feeling back.

"What can I do for you, Mr.—Mr.——"

"Jarrold's the name; James Jarrold of New York. Have you had any messages from a yacht —the *Endymion*—for me?"

"Why, no, Mr. Jarrold," replied Jack wonderingly. "Is she anywhere about these waters?"

"If she isn't, she ought to be. How late do you stay on watch?"

"Till midnight. Then my assistant relieves me till eight bells of the morning watch."

Mr. Jarrold suddenly changed the subject as they stood at the rail on the plunging, heaving deck. Somebody had closed the door that he had left open in his abrupt exit, and Jack could not see his face.

"We're going to have bad weather to-night?" he asked.

"So it appears. A warning has been sent out to that effect, and the sea is getting up every moment."

Mr. Jarrold of New York made a surprising answer to this bit of information.

"So much the better," he half muttered. "You are, of course, on duty every second till midnight?"

"Yes, I'm on the job till my assistant relieves me," responded the young wireless chief of the *Tropic Queen.*

"Do you want to make some money?"

"Well, that all depends," began Jack doubtfully. "You see, I——"

He paused for words. He didn't want to offend this man Jarrold, who, after all, was a first-cabin passenger, while he was only a wireless operator. Yet somehow the man's manner had conveyed to Jack's mind that there was something in his proposal that implied dishonesty to his employers. Except vaguely, however, he could not have explained why he felt that way. He only knew that it was so.

Jarrold appeared to read his thoughts.

"You think that I am asking you to undertake something outside your line of duty?"

"Why, yes. I—must confess I don't quite understand."

"Then I shall try to make myself clear."

"That will be good of you."

The man's next words almost took Jack off his feet.

"When you hear from the *Endymion,* let me know at once. That is all I ask you."

"Then you are expecting to hear from the yacht to-night?" asked Jack wonderingly. It was an unfathomable puzzle to him that this somewhat sinister-looking passenger should have so accurate a knowledge of the yacht's whereabouts; providing, of course, that he was as certain as he seemed.

"I am expecting to hear from her to-night. Should have heard before, in fact," was the brief rejoinder.

"There are friends of yours on board?" asked Jack.

"Never mind that. If you do as I say—notify

me the instant you get word from her, you will be no loser by it."

"Very well, then," rejoined Jack. "I'll see that you get first word after the captain."

Jarrold took a step forward and thrust his face close to the boy's.

"The captain must not know of it till I say so. That is the condition of the reward I'll give you for obeying my instructions. When you bring me word that the *Endymion* is calling the *Tropic Queen,* I shall probably have some messages to send before the captain of this ship is aroused and blocks the wire with inquiries."

"What sort of messages?" asked Jack, his curiosity aroused to the utmost. He was now almost sure that his first impression that Jarrold was playing some game far beyond the young operator's ken was correct.

Jarrold tapped him on the shoulder in a familiar way.

"Let's understand each other," he said. "I

know you wireless men don't get any too big money. Well, there's big coin for you to-night if you do what I say when the *Endymion* calls. I want to talk to her before anyone else has a chance. As I said, I want to send her some messages."

"And as I said, what sort of messages?" said Jack, drawing away.

"Cipher messages," was the reply, as Jarrold glanced cautiously around over his shoulder.

The door behind them had opened and a stout, middle-aged man of military bearing had emerged. He had a gray mustache and iron-gray hair, and wore a loose tweed coat suitable for the night. Jack recognized him as a Colonel Minturn, who had been pointed out to him as a celebrity the day the ship sailed. Colonel Minturn, it was reported, was at the head of the military branch of the government attending to the fortifications of the Panama Canal. The colonel,

with a firm stride, despite the heavy pitching of the *Tropic Queen,* walked toward the bow, puffing at a fragrant cigar.

When Jack turned again to look for Jarrold, he had gone.

CHAPTER IV.

A PECULIAR COINCIDENCE.

But the young wireless boy had no time right then to waste in speculation over the man's strange conduct. It was his duty to relieve Sam, who would not come on watch again till midnight.

As he mounted the steep ladder leading to the "Wireless Hutch," he could feel the ship leaping and rolling under his feet like a live thing. Every now and then a mighty sea would crash against the bow and shake the stout steel fabric of the *Tropic Queen* from stem to stern.

The wind, too, was shrieking and screaming through the rigging and up among the aërials. Jack involuntarily glanced upward, although it was too dark to see the antennæ swaying far aloft between the masts.

"I hope to goodness they hold," he caught him-

self thinking, and then recalled that, in the hurry of departure from New York, he had not had a chance to go aloft and examine the insulation or the security of their fastenings himself.

In the wireless room he found Sam with the "helmet" on his head. The boy was plainly making a struggle to stick it out bravely, but his face was pale.

"Anything come in?" asked Jack.

"Not a thing."

"Caught anything at all from any other ship?"

Sam's answer was to tug the helmet hastily from his head. He hurriedly handed it to Jack, and then bolted out of the place without a word.

"Poor old Sam," grinned Jack, as he sat down at the instruments and adjusted the helmet that Sam had just discarded; "he's got his, all right, and he'll get it worse before morning."

Sam came back after a while. He was deathly pale and threw himself down on his bunk in the

inner room with a groan. He refused to let Jack send for a steward.

"Just leave me alone," he moaned. "Oh-h, I wish I'd stayed home in Brooklyn! Do you think I'm going to die, Jack?"

"Not this trip, son," laughed Jack. "Why, tomorrow you will feel like a two-year-old."

"Yes, I will—not," sputtered the invalid. "Gracious, I wish the ship would sink!"

After a while Sam sank into a sort of doze, and Jack, helmet on head and book in hand, sat at the instruments, keeping his vigil through the long night hours, while the storm shrieked and rioted about the ship.

The boy had been through too much rough weather on the *Ajax* to pay much attention to the storm. But as it increased in violence, it attracted even his attention. Every now and then a big sea would hit the ship with a thundering buffet that sent the spray flying as high as the loftily perched wireless station.

The wind, too, was blowing as if it meant to blow the ship out of the water. Every now and then there would come a lambent flash of lightning.

"It's a Hatteras hummer for sure," mused the boy.

The night wore on till the clock hands above the instruments pointed to twelve.

Above the howling and raging of the storm Jack could hear the big ship's bell ring out the hour, and then, faint and indistinct, came the cry of the bow watch, "All's well." It was echoed boomingly from the bridge in the deep voice of the officer who had the watch.

"Well, nothing doing on that *Endymion* yet," pondered Jack.

He fell to musing on Jarrold's strange conduct. Why had the man suddenly vanished when Colonel Minturn appeared? What was his object in the strange proposal he had made to the young wireless man? What manner of craft was this

Endymion, and how was it possible that she could live in such a sea and storm?

These, and a hundred other questions came crowding into his dozing brain. They performed a sort of mental pin-wheel, revolving over and over again without the lad's arriving at any conclusion.

That some link existed between Jarrold and the *Endymion* was, of course, plain. But just why he should have vanished so quickly when the Panama official appeared, was not equally evident. Jack had a passenger list in front of him, stuck in the frame designed for it.

He ran his eyes over it. Yes, there was the name:

Mr. James Jarrold, N. Y.—Stateroom 44.
Miss Jessica Jarrold, N. Y.—Stateroom 56.

Suddenly Jack's roving glance caught the name of Colonel Minturn, U. S. A., stateroom 46. So the colonel's stateroom adjoined that of the man

who appeared to be so anxious to avoid him! Another thing that Jack noted was that, although the ship was crowded and a stateroom for a single passenger called for a substantial extra payment, both Mr. Jarrold and the army man had exclusive quarters. In the case of Colonel Minturn this was, of course, understandable, but Jarrold? Jack looked at the latter's name again, and now he noticed something else that had escaped him before.

Stateroom 44, the room occupied by Jarrold and adjoining Colonel Minturn's, had evidently been changed at the last moment, for originally, as a crossed-out entry showed, Jarrold had been given stateroom 53. A pen line had been drawn through this entry by the purser evidently, when Jarrold had changed his room.

Jack happened to know that Colonel Minturn had come on board at the last moment, so, then, Jarrold had changed his stateroom only when he had found out definitely that Colonel Min-

turn's room was No. 46. There must be something more than a mere coincidence in this, thought Jack, but, puzzle as he would, he could not arrive at what it meant.

He was still trying to piece it all out when suddenly the door, which he had closed to bar out the flying spray, was flung open.

A gust of wind and a flurry of spume entered, striking him in the face like a cold plunge.

"Bother that catch," exclaimed Jack, swinging round; "I'll have to get the carpenter to fix it to-morrow, I——"

But it was not a weakened catch that had given way. The door had been opened by the hand of a man, who, enveloped in a raincoat and topped by a golf cap, now stood in the doorway.

The man was James Jarrold.

CHAPTER V.

THE INTERRUPTED MESSAGE.

Jack sprang to his feet, but the other held out a withholding hand.

"Stay right where you are, Mr. Ready," he said. "I couldn't sleep and I decided to sit out your watch up here with you. You've no objection?"

"I'm sorry," said Jack, for after all Jarrold was a passenger and it would not do to offend him if he could help it, "but it is against the rules for passengers to linger about the wireless room."

"Well, I can write a message, then. You have no objection to that?"

Jack was in a quandary. He knew perfectly well that Jarrold was there for some purpose of his own, but what it was—except that its aim was sinister—he could not hazard a conjecture.

"Of course the office is always open for business," he rejoined, pushing a stack of sending blanks toward Jarrold.

"Of course," replied Jarrold, sinking into a chair beside the young operator. "By the way, nothing from the *Endymion* yet?"

"That is the business of the line so far, sir," replied Jack. "If it is anything of general interest, you will find the notice posted on the bulletin board at the head of the saloon stairs in the morning."

Jarrold made no reply to this, but sat absent-mindedly tapping his gleaming white teeth with a gold-cased pencil as if considering what he should write on the blank paper before him. He appeared to be in no hurry to begin, but fumbling for his cigar case, produced a big black weed and leisurely lighted it, puffing out the heavy smoke with an abstracted air.

"Sorry, sir," struck in Jack sharply, "but you can't smoke in here, sir."

"Why not?"

"It is against the rules."

"Where do you see such a rule? Reckon you made it, eh? Too much of a molly-coddle to smoke, hey?"

The man's tone was aggressive, offensive. The subtle objection to him that Jack had felt when they first met was growing with every minute. But he kept his temper. It was with an effort, however.

"There are the rules on the wall," he said.

"Humph," said Jarrold, with a disgusted grunt. "In that case I'll throw my cigar away. But one always helps me to think."

"Personally, I've always heard that tobacco dulls the brain," retorted Jack, "but never having tried it, and not wanting to, I don't know how true it is."

Jarrold made no reply to this, but a contemptuous snort. He unfolded his big, loose-knit frame from the chair and went toward the door. He

flung the cigar into the night. As he did so, there was a blinding flash of lightning. The rain was coming in torrents now, but the wind and sea were dying down.

The man came back to his chair and again appeared to be considering the message he should send out.

"I have my doubts about getting a message through to-night at all," hinted Jack. "The rain doesn't always interfere with the Hertzian waves but sometimes it does. Maybe you would better wait till morning."

"I'll send it when I choose," was the growled reply.

At that instant Jack's hand suddenly shot out across the desk in front of him and turned the switch that sent the current into the detectors. Faintly, out of the storm, some whispered dots and dashes had breathed against his ear-drums. Somebody was trying to send a radio.

Jarrold's lounging figure stiffened up quickly.

He had seen Jack's sudden motion and guessed its meaning. He leaned forward eagerly while the young operator tuned his instruments till the message beat more strongly on his ears.

Through the storm the message came raggedly but it was intelligible.

"Tropic Queen! Tropic Queen! Tropic Queen!"

"Yes! Yes! Yes!" flung back the boy at the liner's key. "Who is that?"

"Are you the *Tropic Queen?*"

The sending of the call across the storm was uncertain and hesitating; not the work of a competent operator, but still understandable.

"Yes, this is the *Tropic Queen.*"

The answer that came made Jack thrill up and down his spine.

"This is the *Endymion!*"

Then came a pause that vibrated. Jack pounded his key furiously. The sending on the other craft was bad, and the waves that were

beating against the aërials of the *Tropic Queen* were weak. Although rain does not necessarily hamper the power of the Hertzian billows, and all things being equal the transmission of messages is clearer at night, yet certain combinations may result in poor service.

The spark writhed and squealed and glared with a lambent blue flame as it leaped like a serpent of fire between the points.

But even above its loud, insistent voice calling into the tempest-ridden night could be heard the deep, quick breathing of Jarrold as he leaned forward to catch every move of the young operator's fingers.

"This is the *Endymion,*" came again.

"Yes! Yes!" flashed back Jack.

"Have you a passenger named Jarrold on board?"

Jack's heart and pulses gave a bound. Jarrold was leaning forward till his bristling chin almost

touched Jack's cheek. The man's hand stole back toward his hip pocket and stayed there.

"Yes, what do you want with him?"

"We—have—a—message—for him," came the halting reply.

Jack's fingers were on the key to reply when the quick, harsh voice of Jarrold came in his ear.

"That's the *Endymion*. No monkey business now. Send what I tell you. I——"

There was a sudden blinding flash from the instruments and a blaze of blue, hissing fire filled the wireless room.

Jarrold and the young wireless man staggered back, their hands flung across their faces to shield their eyes from the scorching glare. It was all over in an instant—just one flash and that upheaval of light.

"The aërials have gone!" cried Jack.

He darted from the wireless room, leaving Jarrold alone, a look of frustrated purpose in his eyes.

CHAPTER VI.

A DARING FEAT.

Out along the wet and slippery decks, spray-dashed and awash, rushed the boy. He was headed for the bridge. He found the first officer, Mr. Metcalf, on duty.

The officer was shrouded in gleaming oil-skins and sou'wester. Spray glistened on his cheeks and big mustache as the dim light from the binnacle revealed his features. Ahead of them Jack could make out dimly the big, plunging forepart of the ship as it rushed up a water mountain with glowing phosphorescent head, and then with a swirling roar went sliding down the other side.

"Well, Ready, what's the trouble?" boomed out Mr. Metcalf good-naturedly. "You seem excited."

"Yes, sir. I've just had a message."

The officer was alert in a moment.

"A vessel in distress?"

"No, sir. Although——"

"Well, well, be quick. On a night like this any call may be urgent."

"This was from a yacht. The *Endymion,* she said her name was."

"And she's in trouble?"

Mr. Metcalf was one of those men who leap to instant conclusions. Already he was considering the best method of proceeding to the distressed—as he thought—ship's assistance.

"No, in no trouble, sir. She had a message for a passenger, but in the middle of it something happened to our aërials."

"They've parted?"

"I don't know, sir. Anyhow, I'm going aloft to see. I came to report to you."

"Nonsense, Ready, you can't go aloft to-night. I'll send a man."

"Pardon me, Mr. Metcalf," broke in Jack. "I

don't want to be disrespectful, but there's not a man on this ship who could repair those aërials but myself."

"But you are not used to going aloft," protested Mr. Metcalf.

"I've been up on the *Ajax's* masts in worse weather than this to fix anything that was wrong," he said. "I'll be all right. And besides, I must go. It's my duty to do so."

"Very well, then, but for heaven's sake be careful. You've no idea what the trouble is?"

"No, sir, but I'm inclined to think it is the insulation that has worn and caused a short circuit somewhere. That could easily happen on a night like this."

"Well, be off with you, Ready," said the officer, not without reluctance. "Good luck."

Jack descended from the bridge deck to the main deck. The ship was plunging and jumping like a race-horse. He could catch the wild move-

ment of the foremast light as it swung in crazy arcs against the dark sky.

"Not a very nice night to go aloft," thought the boy, with a shrug, "but it must be done."

Temporarily he had forgotten all about Jarrold. All that lay in front of him was his duty, the stern necessity of repairing the aërials upon which it was possible human lives might depend. In the event of accident to the *Tropic Queen,* the existence of all on board might hang on the good condition of those slender strands of copper wire which alone connected the ship with other craft and dry land.

The wind screamed across the exposed main deck with locomotive-like velocity. Big waves, nosed aside by the bow, viciously took their revenge by sweeping like waterfalls across the ship's stem. Jack was drenched through before he had fought his way to the weather shrouds, by which slender ladder he had to climb to the

top of the swaying steel fore-mast, fully fifty feet above the lurching decks.

He had not put on oil skins and his blue serge uniform, soaked through, clung to his body like an athlete's tights. But he was not thinking of this as he grabbed the lower end of the shrouds and prepared to mount aloft. A big sea swept across the exposed foredeck, almost beating the breath out of his body. But he clung with the desperation of despair to the steel rigging, and the next moment, taking advantage of a momentary lull, he began to mount.

Long before he reached the cross-trees, his hands were cut and sore and every muscle in his body taut as fiddle strings. About him the confusion and the noise of the storm shrieked and tore like Bedlam let loose.

But stubbornly the figure of the young wireless boy crept upward, flattened out by the wind at times against the ratlines to which he clung, and again, taking every fighting chance he could seize,

battling his way up slowly once more. The cross-trees gained, Jack paused to draw breath. He looked downward. He could see, amid the inferno of raging waters, the dim outline of the hull. From that height it looked like a darning needle. As the mast swung, it appeared that with every dizzy list of the narrow body of the ship beneath, she must overturn.

Jack had been aloft often and knew the curious feeling that comes over a novice at the work: that his weight must overbalance the slender hull below. But never had he experienced the sensation in such full measure as he did that night, clinging there panting, wet, bruised, half-exhausted, but yet with the fighting spirit within him unsubdued and still determined to win this furious battle against the elements.

As he clung there, catching his breath and coughing the salt water from his lungs, he recollected with a flash of satisfaction that he had his rubber gloves in his pocket. These gloves are

used for handling wires in which current might be on, and are practically shock-proof. Jack knew that he would have to handle the aërials when he got aloft, and if he had not his gloves with him, he would have stood the risk of getting a severe shock.

With one more glance down, in which he could perceive a dim, wet radiance surrounding the ship like a halo, proceeding from such lights as still were aglow on board, the boy resumed his climb.

The most perilous part of it still lay before him. So far, he had climbed a good broad "ladder"—the ratlines stretched between the three stout steel shrouds. From the cross-trees to the top of the slender mast, there was but a single-breadth foothold between the two shrouds running from the tip of the foremast to the cross-trees.

Far above him, cut off from his vision by darkness and flying scud, Jack knew that the footpath he had to follow narrowed to less than a foot in

breadth. At that height the vicious kicking of the mast must be tremendous.

It was equivalent to being placed on the end of a giant, pliable whip while a Gargantuan Brobdingnagian driver tried to flick you off.

But Jack gritted his teeth, and through the screeching wind began the last lap of his soul-rasping ascent.

He was flung about till his head swam. His ascent was pitifully slow and tortuous. The reeling mast seemed to have a vicious determination to hurtle him through space into the vortex of waters below him, over which he was swung dizzily hither and yon.

But at last, somehow, with reeling brain, cut and bleeding hands and exhausted limbs, he reached the summit and stretched out cramped fingers for the aërials.

With the other hand he clung to the shrouds, and with legs wrapped round them in a death-like grip, he was dashed back and forth through mid-air like a shuttle-cock.

CHAPTER VII.

QUARTERMASTER SCHULTZ VOLUNTEERS.

Clinging with his interlocked lower limbs, Jack managed to draw on his insulated rubber gloves. Then he fumbled, with fear gripping at his cold heart, for his electric torch, which every wireless man carries for just such emergencies.

He pressed the button and a small, pitifully small, arc of light fell on the aërials where they were secured to the mast. Far beneath him on the bridge, the first officer and the wondering captain—who had been summoned from his berth—watched the infinitesimal fire-fly of light as it flickered and swayed at the top of the mast.

The storm wrack flew low and at times it was shut out from their gaze altogether. At such times both men gripped the rail with a dreadful fear that the brave lad, working far above them,

had paid the penalty of his devotion to duty with his life.

But every time that they looked up after such a temporary extinguishment of the flickering light, they saw it still winking like the tiny night-eye of a gnome above them in dark space.

With fingers dulled by the thick rubber covering which he dared not remove, Jack worked among the aërial terminals. One by one he counted the strands.

One, two, three, four, five.

Yes, they were all there. But he did not count them as fast as that. Instead, between the fingering of one and another an interval of ten minutes might elapse, during which time he was flung from pole to pole, dry mouthed and dizzy.

Then came a sudden flash of lightning outlining the rigging, the steel hull far below him, the anxious figures on the bridge and the angry heavens in blue, glaring flame. But Jack had no eye for this. The sudden light had shown him a

jagged rip in the insulation of the wires where they were joined to the mast rigging. Through this, current had been leaking into the mast and robbing the aërials of their power of sending or receiving, short circuiting the Hertzian waves.

Jack waited for a lull and then, almost dead with nausea and brain sickness from his wild buffeting, he reached for his electrician's tape and began making hasty repairs on the electric leak. He bound coil after coil of the adhesive stuff around the exposed wire, till it was blanketed beyond chance of "spilling" into the rain.

Then, his work done, he rested for an instant to steady his whirling senses, and then began the long descent.

Now that the job was over, he felt that he could never live to reach the deck, miles and miles—hundreds and hundreds of miles—below him. Step by step, though, he descended, fighting for his life against the sense numbness that was creeping over him. Limbs and intelligence

seemed equally absent. He felt as if he were a disembodied being, floating through space on the wings of the storm.

He appeared to have no weight. Like a thistle bloom he thought that he might be blown where the winds wished. Conquering this feeling, it was succeeded by a leaden one. He was too heavy to move. His feet felt enormous, and heavy as a deep-sea diver's weighted boots. His head was balloon-like and appeared to sway crazily on his shoulders.

But he still descended. Step by step, painfully, semi-consciously, the brain-sick, nauseated boy clung to the ratlines. On his grip depended his life, and this, in a dim, stupid sort of way, he realized.

If he could only reach the cross-trees! Here he could rest in comparative security for a while.

He must reach them, he must! He wasn't going to die like this. A furious fighting spirit came

over him. His head suddenly cleared; the deadly nausea left him; his limbs grew light.

Jack shouted aloud and came swiftly down. He called out defiantly at the storm. He raved, he yelled in wild delirium.

All at once he felt the cross-trees under his feet. With a last loud cry of triumph he sank down on the projecting steel pieces that formed, at any rate, a resting place.

Then came another wild swing of the ship, and a vicious gust.

Jack felt himself flung from the cross-trees and out into the dark void of the storm.

Down, down, down he went, straight as a stone toward the dark, black, raging vortex through which the ship was fighting.

He felt rather than heard a despairing cry; but did not know whether it had come from his lips or not.

Then a rushing dark cloud enveloped him, and

with a fearful roaring in his ears, Jack's senses swam out to sea.

* * * * * * *

"The light has disappeared, Metcalf. Do you think the poor lad is lost?"

Far below on the bridge, Captain McDonald, oil-skinned like his officer, peered upward.

"The good Lord alone knows, sir," was the fervent reply. "It was a madcap thing to do. I should never have let him go."

"It's done now," muttered the captain. "Though, had you consulted me, I should have forbidden it. That boy is the bravest of the brave."

"He is, sir. You may well say that. A seasoned sailorman might have hesitated to go aloft to-night."

"I wish to heaven I knew what had become of him and if he is safe, yet I wouldn't order another man up there in this inferno."

There was a voice behind him.

"Vouldt you accepdt idt a volunteer, sir?"

"You, Schultz?" exclaimed the captain, turning around to the old quartermaster who was just going off his trick of duty at the wheel. "Why, man, you'd be taking your life in your hands."

"I've been up der masts of sheeps off der Horn on vorse nights dan dees," was the calm reply. "Ledt me go, sir."

"You go at your own responsibility, then," was the reply. "I ought not to let you up at all, and yet that boy—go ahead, then."

The old German quartermaster saluted and was gone.

From the bridge they saw him for a moment, in the gleam of light from a porthole, crossing the wet deck.

He clambered into the shrouds and then began climbing upward along the perilous path Jack had already traveled.

"Pray Heaven we have not two deaths to our

account to-night, Metcalf," said the captain earnestly to his first officer.

"Amen to that, sir," was the reply.

And then there was nothing but the shriek of the wind and the beat of the waves, while the two officers gazed piercingly upward into the darkness where they knew not what tragedies might be taking place.

CHAPTER VIII.

SAFE ONCE MORE.

Suddenly Captain McDonald had an inspiration.

"Metcalf!" he cried, above the storm.

"Sir!" was the alert response of the *Tropic Queen's* chief officer.

"Order the searchlight turned on that mast!"

One of the two quartermasters, struggling with the bucking, kicking wheel, was ordered to get the apparatus ready and focus it on the foremast.

The canvas hood was taken off the big light and then a switch snapped, sputtering bluely. A radiant spear of light pierced the night. It hovered vaguely for a few instants and then settled on the foremast.

It revealed a thrilling scene. Schultz had clasped in his arms the unconscious form of Jack

Ready. For the young wireless man, when he collapsed, had been caught by a stay and held in position on the cross-trees.

Slowly, and with infinite caution, the old quartermaster began to descend the shrouds. It was a nerve-racking task to those looking on. Jack was not a light-weight, and the descent of his rescuer, clasping the boy with one arm while he held on with all his strength, was painfully slow.

But at last they reached the deck in safety, and Captain McDonald was there in person to meet them. He wrung Schultz's hand in a tight grip as the old seaman stood pantingly before him.

"That was as brave a bit of work as I've seen done since I've been going to sea, Schultz," he exclaimed. "I'll see to it that the company gives you recognition. But now let us take this lad to my cabin. He's opening his eyes and the doctor can give him something that will soon set him on his feet again."

And so it proved. Half an hour after Jack had been laid on a lounge in the skipper's cabin and restoratives had been administered by Dr. Flynn, he was feeling almost as hale and hearty as ever, although his terrible ordeal when he was flung back and forth pendulum-wise had left him with a racking headache.

The captain showered congratulations on him, but reminded him that never again must he risk his life in such a perilous way.

"The job could have waited till daylight, anyhow," he said.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Jack, firmly but respectfully, "it could not. You know that I was in communication with a ship—the yacht *Endymion*—when the insulation wore away and my 'juice' began to leak?"

"No, I knew no such thing," said the captain.

"Mr. Metcalf knew of it, sir."

"In all the excitement caused by your exploit, young man, he must have forgotten to tell me."

"That was probably the reason, sir. But the *Endymion*——" The captain broke in as if struck by some sudden thought.

"Jove, lad, the *Endymion,* you say?"

"Yes, sir, do you know her?"

"I know of her. She bears no good reputation. Once she was chartered to the Haytian government and was used as a war ship; then she was in the smuggling trade along the coast. The last I heard of her she was laid up in the marine Basin at Ulmer Park. Her history has been one of troubles. Do you feel strong enough to go back to your key?"

"Yes, sir," exclaimed Jack eagerly. "Young Smalley, my assistant, is too seasick to work tonight. I'll take the trick right through."

"Good for you, my boy. I'll see that you are no sufferer by it. By the way, did the *Endymion* have any message? Was she in trouble?"

"No, sir, but they wished to give some sort of

a radio to a Mr. James Jarrold, one of the first-class passengers."

The captain tapped his foot musingly on the polished wood floor of his cabin.

"Odd," he mused, "I wonder what possible communication they could have to make to him. Is Jarrold a heavy-set man with a blue, square jaw and bristly, black hair?"

"Yes, sir, that is the man to the dot."

"I have noticed him at dinner. He sits at the first officer's table. Back in my head I've got a sort of indefinable idea that I've seen him somewhere before, but just where I cannot, for the life of me, call to mind just now."

"It is too bad that the aërials went out of commission just as that other operator was starting to give the message."

"It was, indeed, but you must try now to pick up this *Endymion* again. I'm curious to know more of her and of our mysterious passenger."

"I'll report to you the instant I get anything, sir," Jack assured him, and hurried off.

On the way he passed Schultz and put out his hand with direct, sailor-like bluntness.

"You saved my life to-night, Schultz. I'll never forget it," he said simply, but there was a wealth of feeling behind the quiet words.

"Oh, dot makes it no nefer mindt, Yack," said the old German. "Don't get excitedt ofer idt. Idt vos just a yob dot hadt to be done und I didded idt."

"It was a great deal more than that," said Jack, with warmth. "I hope some day I will get a chance to repay you."

But Schultz, embarrassed and red as a beet under his tan, had hurried off. Like most sailors, Schultz hated sentiment. To him, his daring deed of saving Jack from his perilous perch in the cross-trees had been all in the line of duty.

Back in the wireless room once more, Jack

looked in on Sam. The boy was sitting up in bed staring feverishly out into the wireless room.

"Oh, Jack, I'm glad you have come back!" he exclaimed. "Where have you been?"

"Fixing a little job of work, youngster. Something was wrong with the wireless. How do you feel?"

"Better, but oh, what a head! It's the worst feeling I ever knew!"

"Like something to eat?"

"For heaven's sake, don't mention it! The mere thought makes me feel bad again. But, listen, Jack, I've something to tell you. I wakened about half an hour ago and there was a man out there in the wireless room."

"What?"

Jack had temporarily forgotten all about Jarrold. Now Sam's remark brought the earlier scene back to him. What had Jarrold been doing in the wireless room while he was absent?

CHAPTER IX.

THE MIDNIGHT INTRUDER.

"He was stooping over the desk, rummaging about the papers and dispatches," said Sam in response to Jack's eager questions.

"Did he take anything?" asked Jack.

"I don't know. I called out to him and asked him what he was doing."

"Yes; what did he say?"

"He didn't say a word. Just hurried out. Who was he?"

"A man named Jarrold. He's a first-cabin passenger. He came in here this evening and was much interested in getting first news of a yacht called the *Endymion*."

"I don't like his looks."

"Frankly, neither do I, and yet one cannot let a man's appearance count against him. But if

he was rummaging about that desk, that is another matter."

"I think he knows something about wireless himself. I saw him fiddling with the key."

"At any rate, I'll keep a close eye on Mr. Jarrold," Jack promised himself. "I don't quite know what all this means, but I bet I'll find out before it's over!"

There was not much more sleep for Sam that night. He fought bravely against his seasickness and took the key for a time while Jack stole a catnap. Both boys worked hard to get in touch with the *Endymion* once more, but they failed to raise her operator. So far as Jack could make out, nothing had been taken from the desk by Jarrold; and the boy came to the conclusion that the man, disbelieving his word, had searched the desk for some evidence of a previous message from the *Endymion*.

At breakfast the next morning Jarrold, cleanly shaven around his blue chin, appeared in the

saloon of the ship accompanied by a very pretty young lady, who, Jack learned, was his niece, Miss Jessica Jarrold. The man did not raise his glance to Jack, although the latter eyed him constantly. The young woman, though, regarded Jack with a somewhat curious gaze from time to time. He was pretty sure in his own mind that she knew of the events of the night.

In fact, she made it a point to leave the table at the same time as did Jack. As they both emerged on deck through the companionway she addressed him.

"Have you heard anything more of the *Endymion?*" she asked.

Although the sea was still running high, the sky was clear and the weather good. She steadied herself against a stanchion as the ship pitched, and Jack found himself thinking that she made a pretty picture there. She was clad in a loose, light coat, and bareheaded, except for a scarf

passed over a mass of auburn hair, from which a few rebellious wind-blown curls escaped.

Jack raised his uniform cap.

"Nothing, Miss Jarrold," he said. "Your——"

"My uncle," she continued for him, "is very anxious to be informed as soon as you do hear."

"Of course, the captain will have to be told first," he said. Her dark eyes snapped and she bit her lip with a row of perfectly even, gleaming little teeth.

"Can't it be arranged so that my uncle can know first about it?" she said, breaking into a smile after her momentary display of irritation. "Suppose you told—well, me, for instance."

"I would be only too glad to do anything to oblige you, Miss Jarrold," said Jack deferentially, "but that is out of the question."

"But why?" she demanded.

"It's a rule," responded Jack.

"Oh, dear, what is a stupid old rule! My uncle is rich and would pay you well for any favor

you did him, and then I should be awfully grateful."

"I'm just as sorry as you are," Jack assured her, "but I simply could not do it."

"Well, will you let my uncle and myself sit up in your wireless room and wait any word you happen to catch?"

"That, too, I am afraid I shall have to refuse to do," said Jack. "Such a procedure would also be against the rules; and especially after something that happened last night, I am determined to enforce the order to the letter."

"What happened last night?" she asked, quizzically eying him through narrowed lids.

"I am afraid you will have to ask your uncle about that, Miss Jarrold. No doubt he will tell you."

Eight bells rang out, and Jack, raising his cap, said:

"That's my signal to go on duty. Depend upon it, though, Miss Jarrold, if I get any word from

the *Endymion* which I can give you without violation of the rules, or if any message comes for either yourself or your uncle, you will be the first to get it."

She made a gesture of impatience and turned to meet her uncle, who was just emerging from the companionway. Jarrold glared at Jack with an antagonism he did not take much trouble to conceal.

"Any news of the *Endymion?*" he growled out in his deep, rumbling bass.

"As I just told Miss Jarrold, there isn't," said Jack. "And, by the way, I hope you had a pleasant evening in my cabin last night."

"I left there as soon as you did, right after the short circuit," said Jarrold, turning red under Jack's direct gaze.

"I'm sorry to contradict you, Mr. Jarrold," replied Jack, holding the man with keen, steady eyes that did not waver under the other's angry

glare. "You were in there quite a time after I left."

"I was not, I tell you," blustered Jarrold. "You are an impudent young cub. I shall report you to the captain."

"I would advise you not to," said Jack calmly. "If you did, I might also have to turn in a report from Assistant Sam Smalley, who was in the other room all the time and saw almost every move you made."

"What! there was someone there?" blurted out Jarrold. And then, seeing the error he had made, he turned to his niece. "Come, my dear, let us take a turn about the decks. I refuse to waste more time arguing with this young jackanapes."

CHAPTER X.

A MESSAGE IN SECRET CODE.

Later that morning something happened which caused Jack to cudgel his brain still further to explain the underlying mystery that he was sure encircled the girl and Jarrold, and in which Colonel Minturn was in some way involved.

He was sitting at the key with the door flung open to admit the bright sunshine which sparkled on a sea still rough, but as a mill pond compared with the tumult of the night before, when there came a sudden call.

"Tropic Queen. Tropic Queen. Tropic Queen."

"Yes, yes, yes," flashed back Jack.

He turned around to Sam.

"I'll bet a million dollars that it is a navy or an army station calling," he said. "You can't mistake the way those fellows send. It is quite

different from a commercial operator's way of pounding the brass."

A moment later he was proved to be right.

"This is the *Iowa,*" came the word. "We are relaying a message from Washington to Colonel Minturn on board your ship. Are you ready?"

"Let her come," flashed back Jack.

He drew his yellow pad in front of him and sat with poised pencil waiting for the message to come through the air from a ship that he knew was at least two hundred miles from him by this time.

"It is in code; the secret government code," announced the naval man.

"That makes no difference to me," rejoined Jack. "Pound away."

"All right, old scout," came through the air, and then began a topsyturvy jumble of words utterly unintelligible to Jack, of course.

The message was a long one, and about the

middle of it came a word that made Jack jump and almost swallow his palate.

The word was *Endymion,* the name of the yacht that had sent out a call for Jarrold through the storm.

Then, closely following, came a name that seemed to be corelated to every move of the yacht: James Jarrold!

At last the message, about two hundred words long, was complete. It was signed with the President's name, so Jack knew that it must be of the utmost importance. He turned in his chair as he felt someone leaning over him and noticed a subtle odor of perfume. Miss Jarrold, with parted lips, was scanning the message eagerly. He caught her in the act.

But the young woman appeared to be not the least disconcerted by the fact. With a wonderful smile she extended a sheet of paper.

"Will you send this message for me as soon as you can, please?" she asked.

Jack was taken aback. He had meant to accuse her point blank of trying to read off a message which was clearly of a highly important nature. But her clever ruse in providing herself with the scribbled message that she now held out to him had quite taken the wind out of his sails.

"Here, Sam, take this message to Colonel Minturn at once," he said, thrusting the paper into Sam's hands and carefully placing his carbon copy of it in a drawer.

"Now, Miss," he said, looking the girl full in the eyes, "I'll take your message."

"Oh, I've changed my mind now," said the girl suddenly turning. "Sorry to have troubled you for nothing. Don't forget about the *Endymion* now."

And she was gone.

"Well, what do you know about that?" muttered Jack. "A woman is certainly clever. Of course, she merely came in here to see what was going on, and, by Jove, she came in at just the

right time, too. Lucky the message was in code. And then she was foxy enough to have that message of hers all ready so that I couldn't say a thing. Oh, she's smart all right! I wish I knew what game was up. I was right about Colonel Minturn playing some part in it, judging from that dispatch, but for the life of me I can't make out what is up."

He was still reflecting over this when Colonel Minturn, with Sam close on his heels, entered.

Jack saluted him.

"Good morning," said the colonel, introducing himself, "I am Colonel Minturn. I have just received a cipher dispatch and want to send a reply."

"I guess I'll have to relay it through the *Iowa* if it is for Washington," said Jack.

"That is just its destination," was the rejoinder. "By the way, I hear from the captain that you did a very brave act last night in climbing the foremast in the storm and repairing the wire-

less. That was nervily done and I want to compliment you on it."

"Glory! And he didn't even breathe a word of it to me!" muttered Sam under his breath.

Jack got red in the face. "Why, that was nothing, Colonel," he said. "It had to be done, and nobody but I could have done it."

"You are as modest as all true heroes," said the colonel approvingly. "But, now, here is the dispatch I want you to send. You see, like the other, it is in cipher. The government's secrets have to be closely guarded."

Jack took the message and filed it and then proceeded to raise the *Iowa* again.

Before long came a reply to his insistent calls.

"Here is the *Iowa*. What is it?"

Something peculiar about the sending struck Jack, but he went ahead.

"This is the *Tropic Queen*. I have a message from Colonel Minturn to Washington. It must be rushed through."

"Very well, transmit," came the answer; but once more the curious ending of the other wireless man struck him forcibly.

"I don't believe that is the *Iowa* at all," he muttered to himself. "I never heard a man-o'-war operator sending like that. It sounds more like—like—by hookey! I've got it. It's that fellow on the *Endymion,* the craft that Jarrold is so much interested in."

Just then, winging through the air, came the short, sharp, powerful sending of the *Iowa.*

"Hullo, there, *Tropic Queen,* this is the *Iowa.* Who is that fellow butting in?"

"I don't know," Jack flashed back. "Re-tune your instruments so that he can't crib this message I'm going to send you. Tune them to man-of-war pitch. From what I heard of his sending, his batteries are too weak to reach such high power."

"All right," was the brief reply.

The two instruments were then run up to a pitch which only the most powerful supply of "juice" could give them. Then came the test and everything was found to be working finely.

Jack at once rattled off the message. In it he noticed that the name Jarrold recurred, also the *Endymion.* Colonel Minturn stood close beside him and watched him with interest as Jack worked his key in crisp, snappy, expert fashion.

"You are a very good operator, my boy," he said when Jack had flashed out good-by with the squealing, crackling spark. "I may have government work for you some day. Should you like it?"

"Oh, Colonel!" cried the boy, his face lighting up, "I'd rather work for Uncle Sam than for anyone else in the world."

"Then some day you may have that opportunity. In the meantime I want you, without saying a word to anybody, to inform me of any suspicious moves on the part of this man Jarrold."

"Why, is he—is he an enemy of Uncle Sam's?" Jack ventured.

"He is probably the most dangerous rascal in existence," was the staggering reply.

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT SAM HEARD.

Jack looked the astonishment he felt. While he had sensed something of sinister import about Jarrold right along, still he had never guessed the man could merit such a sweeping description of bad character.

"The most dangerous rascal in existence," he repeated.

"Yes, I called him that and I mean it," was the reply. "What he is doing on this boat, I don't know. But I have a guess and am prepared for him."

He drew from his hip pocket a wicked looking automatic.

"Is it as bad as that?" asked Jack.

"I don't know. But, at any rate, I am prepared. Jarrold has been mixed up in desperate

enterprises in a score of countries. He is a diplomatic free lance of the worst character. It was Jarrold who stole the documents relating to the Russian navy, which it cost that country so much time and trouble to recover before they found their way into the hands of another power."

"And the young lady—his niece?"

"She has been implicated in most of his plots. They are a dangerous pair. You will do me and the government a great favor by keeping an eye on them. You will be able to do this, as I understand they are trying hard to establish communication with a yacht called the *Endymion.*"

"Yes; both the man and the girl appear very anxious to do that," rejoined Jack.

"Jarrold has the stateroom next to mine. In my possession are documents that would be of immense value to a certain far eastern power that wishes the United States no good."

"You think that Jarrold is after these?" asked Jack.

"It is the only supposition I can go upon. That cipher message from the government warned me to be careful of the man, as his errand had been surmised by the Secret Service men. They also found out about the *Endymion,* which fact I did not know before."

"And he is, apparently, an American, too," exclaimed Jack.

The colonel nodded.

"Yes, he is a westerner by birth, I believe, but that makes little difference to men of his type. The only country they know is the one that gives the biggest price for their rascalities."

"He ought to be shot for trying to betray the country he owes his birth to," said Jack hotly.

The colonel smiled and laid a hand on the excited lad's shoulder.

"You feel about it as I do, lad," he said. "But remember we have nothing to go upon as yet. Absolutely nothing."

Jack agreed that this was so, and after some

more conversation, the colonel left the wireless room, first warning the young operator that their talk must be held absolutely confidential.

Of course Jack promised this, and so did Sam. But both lads felt that they were playing parts in a big game, the nature of which was an absolute mystery so far.

"It's like sitting on a keg of dynamite," said Sam.

"Yes; I have a feeling that there is something electrical in the air," said Jack, "besides wireless waves. It may break at any minute, too."

"If it does, I hope we get a chance to help out the colonel."

"Yes, he is a fine man, a splendid type of soldier. I don't wonder the government chose him for this Panama errand."

"It's a mighty responsible job," agreed Sam.

"And particularly when such a clever rascal as Jarrold, with unlimited power at his back, is hanging about."

But then it was dinner time, and Sam, whom even the most engrossing conversation could not keep from his meals, hastened below. When he came back, he had an important look on his face.

"I stopped on deck for a breath of fresh air," he said, "and stood out of the wind behind a big ventilator. Jarrold and his niece came along."

"Didn't they see you?"

"No; they were talking too earnestly; besides, the ventilator hid me, anyhow."

"Did you hear what they said?"

"I couldn't catch much of it."

"Well, let's hear what you were able to pick up."

"Well, the man appeared to be urging something that the girl objected to. 'I tell you it is too dangerous,' I heard her say.

"Then the man, in a rough voice, told her she was a foolish woman and that he was going 'to do it to-night at all costs.'

" 'You may ruin everything,' she said, but he

only laughed and said that if he failed this time, he would succeed later on, anyway."

"Hum, that's a mighty interesting scrap of conversation," mused Jack, "I wonder what the old fox is up to now."

"Maybe we'd better inform the colonel," suggested Sam.

"Hardly. Not with the meager information we've got. He would only laugh at us. No, we'll have to wait and see what the event will be. But depend upon it, there is something in the wind."

Jack was right. What that something was, he was not to learn till later, but it was far more startling and was to involve him more deeply than he imagined.

CHAPTER XII.

A SUDDEN ALARM.

At midnight, while the *Tropic Queen* was plying ever southward through smooth seas and under a dark canopy of sky lit by countless stars, Jack left his key and, calling Sam, whose turn it was on watch, went below for his customary midnight "snack." A sleepy-eyed steward served him in the big saloon, which looked empty and desolate with only one light in all its vastness.

Jack ate heartily and then prepared to go on deck again. He had reached the foot of the saloon stairs when a sudden sound made him pause.

It was the rustle of skirts. Jack drew back into the shadow which hung thickly over that part of the saloon. To his astonishment, for he thought that all the passengers—except a belated

party in the smoking-room—were in bed, he saw that the figure which passed swiftly through the corridor beyond the staircase was that of Miss Jarrold.

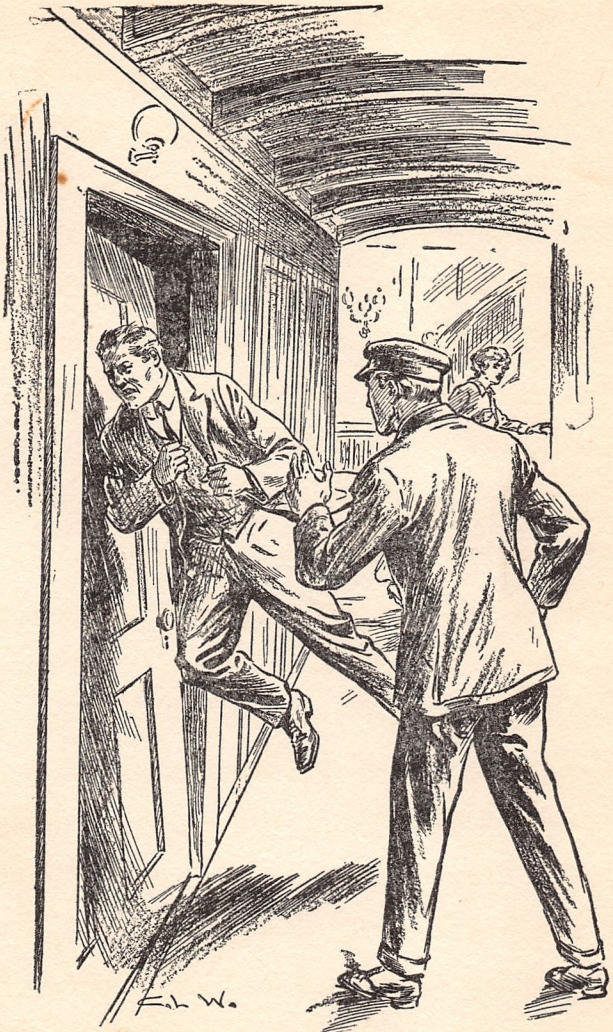
She wore a white dress which showed ghost-like through the gloom, although the corridor was dimly lighted. But there was no mistaking her slender, graceful outlines and quick, panther-like walk.

Suddenly the conversation that Sam had repeated to him flashed across Jack's mind. It had appeared to foreshadow some desperate attempt to gain whatever the pair had set their minds on. Almost beyond a doubt, these were the papers and plans relating to the Panama Canal. Jack knew that Colonel Minturn's cabin was in the direction the girl was following.

Could it be possible that——

Suddenly a piercing shriek came, followed by cry after cry.

Jack's heart stood still. His scalp tightened.



The cry was the most blood-chilling that can be heard at sea.—*Page* 89

The cry was the most blood-chilling that can be heard at sea.

"Fire! Fire! Fire!"

Jack dashed down the passage. From every stateroom now, shouts of men and screams of women were coming. Warned by he knew not what instinct, he made for Colonel Minturn's cabin.

It lay just around a corner of the passage. He had just gained it, when he saw a bulky figure, that of Jarrold, hurl itself against the door and go smashing through it. Jack rushed up.

Jarrold turned on him with a savage growl.

"Get away from here, boy. I'll save Colonel Minturn. You go and warn the other passengers."

But Jack made no move to go. Instead, he stepped into the cabin. In his bunk lay the colonel, apparently sleeping deeply. Jack shook him, but he did not move, only lay there, breathing heavily.

"This man has been drugged," he exclaimed half aloud.

At the same instant he felt the hulking form of Jarrold fling itself at him.

"You infernal, interfering young spy," he snarled. "Get out of here. Get back to your post. Send out an alarm of fire."

He seized Jack with his big hands. The boy's blood boiled. Big as Jarrold was, and powerful, too, Jack was, he thought, a match for him.

Jarrold aimed a fierce blow at him. Jack dodged it and parried it with one of his own. Then the two clinched. Jarrold's powerful arms encompassed the boy, squeezing the breath out of him.

Outside the cabin, people in all stages of dress and undress were rushing about screaming and shouting. The whole ship was in pandemonium. Within the cabin, for Jarrold had closed the door when he followed Jack in, the two combatants, the boy and the man, fought in desperate silence

for the mastery, while the man in the bunk lay with closed eyes, breathing heavily.

Back and forth they swayed till Jack suddenly wrenched himself loose. He delivered a powerful blow and stopped a bull-like rush from Jarrold. The fire, everything, was forgotten before his desire to overcome the man who had attacked him.

Jarrold was, as has been said, a bull of a man. Thick-necked, powerful and possessed of no little science, he could have torn Jack to pieces if he could have gripped him right. But Jack, once free of his clutches, was careful to avoid this.

Jack possessed no little of the science of the gymnasium, too. He fought coolly, taking every advantage of his skill. Again and again he dodged Jarrold's mad rushes, and again and again he landed blows which seemed heavy enough to fell an ox.

But they did not appear to have any effect on Jarrold's big frame. A mere grunt was the only

sign that he had noticed them. Jack began to despair of handling his man after all.

In the struggle, furniture was smashed, Jarrold's coat torn, and both combatants' faces were cut and bruised. Gasping for breath, dizzy from the thundering shock of the few blows Jarrold had driven home like flesh and blood sledge hammers, Jack was about to give up, when suddenly he noticed that no one was facing him. Jarrold, breathing heavily, his face purple, lay stretched across a lounge as he had fallen.

A terrible thought flashed through Jack's mind. Suppose he had killed him?

CHAPTER XIII.

A DOSE OF SLEEPING POWDER.

Jack rushed out into the hallway. It was not, as he had expected, smoke-filled, nor was there any odor of fire in the air. Somewhere he could hear the voices of officers shouting above the distant hub-bub in the saloon: "Keep your heads! There is no fire."

Doctor Flynn, the ship's surgeon, came hurrying by. Jack stopped him and explained what had occurred in Colonel Minturn's cabin.

"We must send for help and carry them both out of danger at once," he said.

"Danger? But there is no danger," exclaimed the doctor.

"But the fire?" gasped the boy.

"There is none. It was either the overwrought nerves of a silly woman that started the panic,

or else there was some malicious design underlying the whole thing."

The thought of what he had seen as he stood in the shadow of the saloon stairway rushed across Jack's mind: Miss Jarrold's sudden appearance and then the scream of fire. Could it have been possible that this was the thing that Sam had overheard her and her uncle debating? That, taking advantage of the panic they knew would be caused by such an alarm in the dead of night, Jarrold had schemed a way to enter Colonel Minturn's cabin?

"Will you come into Colonel Minturn's cabin with me at once, doctor?" asked Jack.

"Certainly, my boy. But," and the doctor stared at him in amazement, "what has happened to you? Your face is bruised and marked. Have you been fighting?"

"A little bit," said Jack grimly.

"With whom?"

"With a man I believe to be a consummate

scoundrel. By the merest accident on earth, I happened along here just in time to frustrate what I believe to be a plot against Colonel Minturn."

All this Jack explained hastily as they retraced their way down the corridor to Colonel Minturn's cabin. The panic had died down, and the passengers, reassured now, were making their divers ways back to their cabins. Some tried to turn the whole matter into a joke. Others looked sheepish over the panic-stricken way in which they had behaved.

But when the two entered the colonel's cabin a surprise awaited them.

Jarrold was not there.

Jack rubbed his mental eyes. He could have sworn he had left the man lying across the lounge, to all appearances stunned. Now, in the brief interval that the boy had been out of the cabin, the man had gone.

"He must have been playing 'possum," said the

surgeon, when Jack had briefly explained the circumstances; "but now let us see to Colonel Minturn."

The doctor bent over the officer's form as it lay in the bunk. The colonel was breathing heavily, his pulse was slow, his face gray.

"Run to my cabin for my medicine bag," ordered the doctor to Jack. "You will find it on my lounge. Hurry back."

Jack waited to ask no questions but sped off. The corridors were still choked with passengers discussing the fire scare. Most of them appeared to think it had been a grim and criminal form of joke on somebody's part. There was talk of offering a reward for the discovery of the culprit.

But Jack, knowing what he did, placed, as we know, a more sinister construction on the midnight alarm. He was soon back with the doctor's bag. The surgeon took out of it a small

syringe and injected some sort of solution into the unconscious man's arm.

"What is the matter with him, sir, do you think?" ventured Jack, as the doctor, his hand on Minturn's pulse, sat by the side of the bunk.

"He has been drugged. That much is plain. Although what the agency was, I cannot guess," was the rejoinder.

A small glass article lying on the floor caught Jack's eye. It was an atomizer, such as are used for perfumes. But this was filled with a gray powder. He pressed the rubber bulb and an impalpable cloud of the powder was sprayed into the air He immediately felt sick and dizzy.

"Look here, sir, what do you make of this?" he cried excitedly, handing it to the doctor. "I found it on the floor. It must have dropped from Jarrold's pocket while we were struggling. I'm sure that that powder in it is some sort of drug. When I sprayed it out, it made me feel weak and faint."

The doctor took the glass vessel, unscrewed the top and shook out a small quantity of the powder on his palm.

"This is an important discovery, indeed," he exclaimed. "It is a sleeping powder used by a certain South African tribe. A sufficient quantity sprayed into the atmosphere would send anyone into a coma. It is not poisonous, merely sleep producing."

"Then you think that some of it was sprayed into this room, possibly through the transom, by Jarrold before——"

"We'll leave Mr. Jarrold's name out of this for the present," said the doctor shortly. "Remember, we have no proof against him. For all you know, and for all that appears, he broke in here to try to save the colonel when the cry of fire occurred."

"But he attacked me," protested Jack.

"His answer to that would be that you were not at your post, where you should have been."

Jack colored. This was true. Jarrold had indeed a rejoinder to everything he might say against the man. When it came to a point, the lad had plenty of suspicions and theories, but absolutely no proofs to offer. He couldn't even state positively that the atomizer full of the sleeping powder was Jarrold's.

The colonel moved uneasily and opened his eyes. In a few moments he was able to talk.

"Why, what has happened?" he asked drowsily, looking first at the doctor and then at Jack.

"First, will you tell us the last thing you recollect, Colonel?"

"Most assuredly. I came to bed early. Before turning in, I examined certain papers of mine and found they were all in perfect order. This done, I lay down with a book. Suddenly I felt unaccountably drowsy, and—and that's all. But what has occurred in the meantime? I can tell by your presence in the cabin that something out of the ordinary is up."

"Will you first oblige me by making sure your papers are safe?" asked the doctor.

"Certainly; they are in this box under my pillow. Ah yes, everything is in perfect order. As you see, this is a combination lock. I could tell in an instant if it had been tampered with."

"Then, Colonel, I think that you should thank this young man here for saving you from a theft that might have cost you dearly," said the doctor, indicating Jack.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WINKING EYE.

"I—I must confess I don't understand," said the colonel, looking bewilderedly from one to the other of his two companions.

"Then let me enlighten you." And, supplemented from time to time by Jack, the doctor gave a concise account of the incidents leading up to the discovery of Jarrold breaking into the colonel's cabin.

The officer could hardly believe his ears.

"Of course I have suspected Jarrold all along, and cannot be too grateful to this young man for his vigilance," he said; "but the diabolical ingenuity of the man is beyond me."

"He ought to be in irons at this minute," asserted the doctor, "but so far as I can see, he has covered up his tracks so cleverly that we

have nothing upon which to base a complaint against him."

"At the present time, no, unfortunately," said the colonel reluctantly. "And if it had not been for Mr. Ready, here, the whole plot might have proved a complete success."

"I think it is reasonably certain that when you awakened, which might not have been till late to-morrow morning, you would have found your papers gone," said the doctor.

"But in that case, I should have instantly suspected Jarrold," was the reply. "And exercising my authority as an officer of the United States army, I could have had him detained under suspicion while his baggage and his person were searched."

"I am afraid that that would have been very much like looking for a needle in a haystack," said Dr. Flynn. "A rascal as clever as he is would have found some way to dispose of the

papers, where it would be highly improbable that they could be found."

"You are right," agreed Colonel Minturn. "Well, gentlemen, I think that for the sake of all concerned, we had better keep this secret among us three and await developments."

"But Jarrold knows that Ready suspects him," objected the doctor.

"Oh, well, for that very reason, he won't do any talking," was the colonel's response. "We must watch and wait, and the next time catch him red-handed."

"Then you think he will make another attempt?" asked Jack.

"I have not the slightest doubt of it. Whatever nation is paying him, it has set a high price on the successful issue of his venture; and he will stop at nothing to put it through, if I have any knowledge of the man," was the response.

"I think the best thing we can all do now is to turn in," said Dr. Flynn.

This was generally agreed and good-nights were said; but before Jack sought his cabin, he visited the doctor's room, where his face was attended to so as to leave hardly any marks of his encounter with Jarrold.

The latter did not appear the next day, but his niece, radiant and smiling, was at breakfast as if nothing had occurred. Jack looked at her wonderingly. He had not the slightest doubt that her part in the plot had been the cry of "Fire"; but she appeared as carefree and debonair as if she had nothing more important on her mind than making a charming appearance.

Jack could not help grinning to himself when Jarrold did not come down.

"I guess I gave him something to think about," he remarked with a chuckle to Sam, as the two discussed the subject.

Jarrold appeared the next day. A dark mark under his left eye was the only visible sign of the encounter in Colonel Minturn's cabin. He

studiously avoided the other passengers, however, and spent most of his time pacing the deck with his niece.

The weather was steadily growing warmer now. Porpoises appeared in rolling, leaping schools, and flying fish were stirred up in whole coveys by the ship's bow. The officers donned white uniforms, as did our wireless boys, and everything indicated that the steamer was entering the tropics.

It was Jack's first voyage into such regions, and both he and Sam thrilled with the anticipation of seeing the new sights and people. But all the time, Jack was aware that under their feet was a smoldering volcano. Covered for a time, and blanketed, it was still smoldering, of that he was certain. He caught himself wondering uneasily what form the next attempt would take.

It was his watch one night and he was turning over these things in his mind as the ship plowed steadily onward, when, on going to the door of

his cabin for a breath of fresh air, he was surprised to see, not far off, the green starboard and white mast headlights of what, from the distance between the lights on her fore and main masts, appeared to be a fair-sized steamer. She was steaming in the same direction as the *Tropic Queen* and going quite as fast.

Now, under ordinary circumstances, the sight of another craft on the same course would not have astonished one. But nowadays, when almost every ship is equipped with wireless, the operators of most vessels know precisely what craft are in their vicinity. Even in the case where ships are slow, and not equipped with radio apparatus, they usually signal, by day or night signals, to craft which have wireless, and ask to be reported. So that the sight of this stranger, moving along parallel with the *Tropic Queen,* gave Jack what was not exactly a thrill, but a sensation of vague uneasiness.

All at once, on her bridge, a red light began

to flash. Like a blood-shot eye it winked through the dark night.

"By Jove, signals!" exclaimed Jack.

He got his signal code book and was able to read off, by his knowledge of Morse, the letters and words the strange craft was sending, as distinctly as if they had been printed. But they simply formed a meaningless jumble.

"It's a code message to someone on board this ship," muttered Jack to himself, as the crimson eye ceased to wink.

As it stopped transmitting its untranslatable—except to one who held the key—message through the darkness, the strange ship began to drop back under reduced speed. Whatever its mission, it had been accomplished. That much was plain. Jack wished that the jumble of words before him was as clear.

He sat there racking his brains over the matter till almost midnight, when Sam relieved him. The assistant operator looked at the message,

over which Jack was knitting his brows, with astonishment.

"What in the world is that?" he asked.

"I wish I knew," was Jack's enigmatic reply, "but there's one man on board this ship who does, and I'm inclined to think that his name is James Jarrold."

CHAPTER XV.

SECRET SIGNALS AT DAWN.

The next morning both Jack and Sam were on the *qui vive* for a sight of the mysterious steamer of the night. But not even a smudge on the horizon gave indication of what had become of her. When Jack went down to breakfast, he met First Officer Metcalf and spoke to him of the strange signals.

"Yes; Muller, the third officer, who had the bridge last night, reported them to me this morning," was the reply. "He jotted them down as they were flashed, but we can't make head nor tail of them."

"Nor can I," confessed Jack. "It was a code message of some sort."

"Some would-be funny chump having a joke at our expense, I reckon," was the way that Mr.

Metcalf, who, of course, knew nothing of the suspected machinations of Jarrold, dismissed the subject.

A lingering suspicion was in Jack's mind that, by some queer chance, the message might have been for Colonel Minturn, so after the morning meal he drew him aside. But when shown the message, Colonel Minturn declared that, although the government used several codes, the one in question was not one of them.

"Then it was for Jarrold," declared Jack positively, for, knowing what he did, he could not share Mr. Metcalf's "joker" theory.

"I believe you are right," responded Colonel Minturn, stroking his mustache thoughtfully. "Jove, this thing is taking some strange turns!"

Their eyes strayed to where Jarrold, sprawled out in a deck chair, was seemingly absorbed in a book. But Jack could have sworn that over the top of it he was covertly watching them.

"It is evident, to my way of thinking," Jack

ventured, "that the strange craft was the *Endymion,* and that, despairing of getting a wireless to Jarrold, or else on account of a break-down in their wireless, they decided to chance that method of signaling him."

"That certainly appears plausible," said Colonel Minturn. "The *Endymion,* when pressed, can make twenty-five miles an hour. Our speed is about sixteen. Therefore, it would be an easy matter for her to overhaul us at night, slip away in the daytime, and sneak back at night once more."

"I think it would be a good plan to keep a sharp look-out to-night," said Jack. "I've a notion that there may be something in the wind."

"I agree with you," was the colonel's rejoinder. "Although, if it comes down to that, there's no reason why Jarrold shouldn't, if he wishes to, exchange messages with any ship. At least, I know of no way of stopping him."

"That's just the trouble, sir," said Jack, turn-

ing to go. "He's too much of a fox to put himself into a position where we can get anything definite on him."

The day passed uneventfully and the first part of the night was the usual unbroken routine. Jack spoke with two or three vessels in the West Indian and South American trade. But nothing unusual occurred to break the monotony. Midnight found him on the watch. When Sam, as much interested in the strange developments as was Jack, came to relieve him at the wireless key, Jack decided to forego his sleep and do some investigating.

Putting on a pair of light canvas shoes with rubber soles, Jack took up a position on the main deck as soon as the ship was wrapped in sleep, except for the watch and the officer who paced the bridge unceasingly under the blazing tropic stars. His vigil was not rewarded till some time before dawn, when, out of the blackness to port,

came the sudden blinking of a scarlet disk, like the leering wink of an ensanguined eye.

It came so suddenly and startlingly that Jack knew that the stranger, the one he was now convinced was the *Endymion,* had crept up without lights, under cover of darkness. There came a few dots and dashes, indicated by the length of the flash of the red light. Then it ceased.

Then it began again, flashing like a night heliograph.

"By Jove! Somebody answered them from this ship!" exclaimed Jack in high excitement.

But the decks were bare. Not a soul was to be seen. Had it been anyone above, Sam was on the lookout there and would have notified Jack at once.

Suddenly a thought flashed across the boy. A thought that sent him, with a swift, noiseless stride, to the rail. He peered overside. It had just occurred to him that Jarrold's cabin was an

outside one on the port side of the *Tropic Queen,* which presented that flank to the stranger.

As he gained the side and peered over, he gave vent to what was almost a shout of triumph. He had solved part of the riddle at any rate. After a pause in the signaling from the stranger, there had come from the side of the *Tropic Queen* a sudden flash of red light. It was reflected ruddily on the smooth water as it gleamed across the sea.

"So that's it, eh, Mr. Jarrold!" cried Jack in a low undertone. "You've got some sort of a flash lantern rigged in your stateroom, connected with the electric light socket, likely, and you're having a nice little talk with your friends over yonder."

All at once he slapped his thigh as a thought struck him. He knew that a common switch controlled the lights in each separate corridor of the ship. Thus, the four cabins in the section that Jarrold occupied, while they each had their in-

dividual light switches, were also controlled by a switch in the main corridor.

This was so that, in case of accident, the electricians could work more conveniently.

"I don't know what the skipper would say to this," exclaimed Jack, "but here goes."

He darted below and soon reached the point in the main port corridor from which the passage on which the four cabins in Jarrold's section opened. He fumbled for the switch in the half darkness. First, though, he had looked to see that no other lights were shining in that section except the one he was sure was being used in Jarrold's room.

Click! The switch was turned.

"Now we'll see," exclaimed Jack to himself.

He hastened back on deck. Through the night, off to the port the strange craft was signaling frantically. Jack chuckled.

"Spiked your guns, Mister Jarrold," he laughed, as the signaling continued. Plainly on

the other ship they could not understand why they no longer got flashed replies from Jarrold's room.

"Oh, I'll bet the air is blue below," chuckled Jack, delighted at the success of his plan. "Now I'll just watch till they get sick of waiting for Mr. Jarrold, and then go below and put that switch on again."

For half an hour the vain red flashes came out of the night and then they ceased.

"I guess they've sneaked off for fear daylight would discover them," said Jack. "Now to switch the light on again, and then for a snooze. I think I've earned it."

CHAPTER XVI.

S. O. S.

Dawn showed a smudge of black smoke on the far horizon which might or might not have been the mysterious visitant of the night At any rate, by noon something occurred which quite put out of Jack's mind, and those of the ship's officers, who were considerably exercised over the midnight signals, all thoughts of the secretive craft.

To Jack, seated at his instruments, there had suddenly come a sharp call:

"S.O.S.—S.O.S.—S.O.S."

Coming as it did, like a bolt from the blue, the urgent call thrilled the young operator. He galvanized into action instantly and sent Sam scurrying to the bridge with word that the most urgent call that can assail a wireless man's ears had just come to him.

It was faint and far away, but that very fact made it evident to Jack's experienced mind that whoever was sending the message, was in dire straits and running out of current.

He pressed his key and sent thundering out with all the volleying force of his powerful dynamos, an answer.

"What ship are you?" he demanded.

The answer that came back almost knocked him out of his chair.

"The airship *Adventurer,* from New Orleans to Havana. We are on the surface of the water and sinking rapidly."

"Your position, quick!" demanded Jack.

Back through space, in a slowly dying wireless voice, came the latitude and longitude of the luckless craft.

"You are on our course. Stand by and we will pick you up," said Jack, whom a rapid glance at the wall map had shown that, roughly, the

sinking air-craft was not more than twenty miles to the southwest of the *Tropic Queen's* position.

"What has happened?" asked Jack.

"No time explain details. Hurry! Hurry! ——"

Jack tried to get the unseen operator once more, but a silence that was far more eloquent than words alone greeted his efforts. He turned to see the captain, in his white uniform and gold-laced cap, standing behind him.

"What is this S.O.S., Ready?" he demanded. "What craft is in distress?"

"An airship, sir. The *Adventurer,* bound from New Orleans for Havana, Cuba."

"By Neptune! I recall now reading that two aviators were going to make such a foolhardy attempt."

"What kind of an air-craft is she, sir? Do you recall?"

"Why, one of those flying-boats, as they are called, I believe."

"A big aëroplane fitted with a boat's hull?"

"That's the idea. But did they give you their position?"

Jack handed over the figures.

"Here they are, sir. But the current from the drifting airship was so weak that I cannot be absolutely certain as to their accuracy."

"Well, we'll have to take them for what they are worth," said the captain, scanning them.

"Roughly, they are on our course, sir," ventured Jack.

"Yes, we can almost make a landfall on them if you got the positions right. I'll have full speed ahead signaled. Poor fellows, their plight must be desperate!"

He hastened off to give the necessary orders, while Jack went back to his instruments; but, although he tried with all his might to get another whisper, he could hear nothing.

Either the wrecked airship had gone to the

bottom, or else, water having reached her storage batteries, she could no longer send out word.

But Jack raised another ship,—the *City of Mexico* of the Vera Cruz line.

"What's biting you?" the flippant operator inquired.

"Just got word that a wrecked airship is floating about on the sea," flashed back Jack, and gave the latitude and longitude.

"Why, we'll be there almost as soon as you," was the reply.

"All right, let's make it a race," called Jack. "It is one for a good cause."

"Surest thing you know. See you later."

The *City of Mexico's* wireless man cut off. The third officer came into the wireless room.

"Ready, the old man wants you to make out a bulletin for the passengers. They'll go wild over this."

Jack quickly typed off a bulletin.

"Shortly before noon, in communication with wrecked and drifting flying-boat *Adventurer*. She is about twenty miles to the Southwest. We are hurrying at top speed to her assistance and should be there in a little over an hour's time.

"READY, Chief Operator,

"S. S. Tropic Queen."

The excitement that followed the posting of this notice on the bulletin board at the head of the saloon stairs may be imagined by those who have passed long, dreamy, uneventful days at sea, when even the sight of a distant sail provides all manner of topics of conversation.

But now they were steaming at top speed toward the hulk of a flying-boat—that is, provided she was still on the surface. The ship buzzed and hummed with vibrant excitement. Passengers lined the rails, and some of the more excitable even tried to swarm into the rigging, from which exalted positions they were swiftly ejected.

Black smoke poured from the *Tropic Queen's* funnels, and the speed of her accelerated engines caused a humming vibration to run through her frame like the twanging of a taut fiddle string. On the bridge, white-uniformed officers stood, with glasses in hand, all on the alert to catch the first black speck on the sparkling sea which might reveal the location of the wrecked air adventurers.

Forward, on the forepeak and in the crow's nest, lookouts had been doubled. And excitement was added to the race to the rescue when it became known that the *City of Mexico* was speeding from the southward on the same errand of mercy.

CHAPTER XVII.

A DERELICT OF THE SKIES.

"What a wonderful thing wireless is!" remarked Sam, as the two young operators stood gazing from the upper deck where their "coop" was perched.

"Yes, if that flying-boat hadn't carried even the small, weak equipment she has, it would have been all off with them," agreed Jack; "that is, if they are not at the bottom now."

"Oh, I hope not!" cried Sam.

"Same here. But still, the sudden way that message cut off looked odd."

The boys said little more, but kept their attention concentrated, waiting for the first sharp, quick cry that would announce that the derelict of the skies had been sighted. It was nerve-racking, the waiting for that shout.

It seemed that hours had passed, when suddenly there came a sharp bark from the bows. A keen-eyed salt stationed there had seen something even before the officers on the bridge had sighted it through their binoculars.

"What is it, my man?" hailed Captain McDonald through a speaking trumpet.

"Can't just make out, sir. It might be a big whale, but it looks to me like a boat."

The officers scrutinized the object pointed out through their glasses. It lay some miles from the ship, spread out darkly on the blue, gently-heaving sea.

"Can you see any human beings on board it?" demanded Captain McDonald anxiously of Mr. Metcalf.

"No, sir, I—yes, I do, too. One man. He is standing up, waving."

"Give me the glasses, Metcalf."

The captain took the binoculars.

"Yes, you're right; there's a man on board.

But how long he will keep afloat, I don't know. Lucky the sea is calm."

"You may well say that, sir. In my opinion, whatever he is standing on is due to sink before long."

"My opinion, too. But hullo, what is that coming up over the horizon there?"

"That smoke, sir? That must be the *City of Mexico.*"

"Yes, you're right, it is. I can see her masts now. She's coming up fast."

"We don't want to let her beat us, sir."

"No, indeed; signal below for more speed."

Mr. Metcalf jerked the engine-room telegraph. A quickened impulse of the steel hull followed. Inky smoke rolled in volumes from the two funnels of the big ship. Never had she gone faster. Under the forced draught in the sweating stokeholds below, the firemen toiled desperately. Steam screeched from the 'scape pipes in a con-

stant roar, testifying to the big head of power being carried in the ship's boilers.

It was a race to thrill the most critical, and a contest of speed, too, which had, as its goal, a human life; for, from the frantic signals now being made by the man on the drifting flying-boat, it was plain that he did not expect to keep above the water much longer.

The *Mexico's* wireless man was signaling Jack.

"Hit it up, you *Tropic Queen.*"

"We're doing nicely, thank you," came back Jack. "What's the matter with your old sea-going smoke wagon?"

In this way the messages between the two on-rushing steamships were flashed back and forth above the sparkling sea, while the drama of the race for a life was going forward.

And now the passengers had caught sight of the tiny object adrift on the vast ocean. A hoarse cheer ascended to the boat decks, in which the shrill voices of women mingled. They were

shouting encouragement and advice to the castaway of the sky.

He replied by waving. The speed of the ship suddenly was reduced. Under Quartermaster Schultz a boat crew was made up. Jack begged to be allowed to be one of them and, to his delight, the captain told him to cut along.

Sam, although deeply disappointed at being left behind, nevertheless cheered with the rest as the boat was lowered and struck the water with a splash. Then, as the steamer's propellers ground in reverse to check her way, it dashed off toward the stricken flying-boat.

The craft could be seen quite plainly now—a dainty affair with golden, shimmering wings supporting a boat-like structure amidships. Jack was familiar with the general construction of flying-boats, the very latest type of aëroplane, from pictures he had seen in magazines, but he had never seen a real one before. He marveled

that so frail looking a craft could have made her way so far out to sea.

But as they neared the stricken airship, shouting words of encouragement to her lone occupant, a startling thing happened. Simultaneously a groan burst from the throats of the boat crew.

The flying-boat vanished from the surface of the sea as if she had been a smudge wiped off a slate with a sponge.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A LEAP FOR A LIFE.

Had the lone navigator of the craft perished when she gave the last swift and decisive plunge to the bottom? A groan that went up from the decks of the *Tropic Queen,* which had steamed quite close, seemed to indicate that the enthralled onlookers thought so.

But suddenly Jack gave a shout:

"There he is! Over there! Pull for your lives, men!"

The brawny arms of the oarsmen needed no encouragement. Every man bent to his work till the stout ash sweeps curved and their backs cracked.

The boat flew across the water to a tiny, bobbing, black dot, the head of the castaway aviator. As they drew closer, they could see his face

He held in his arms the body of the half-drowned man.
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turned toward them imploringly. He was a young man, black-haired and apparently good-looking, although they did not pay much attention to his appearance just then.

As they drew alongside, his strength suddenly seemed to give out after the brave struggle he had made, and he disappeared under the water. Even as he did so, a figure leaped from the boat in a long, clean dive. When Jack, for it was the young wireless man who had made the daring leap, reappeared, he held in his arms the body of the half-drowned man.

A dozen eager hands drew them aboard the boat, while from both the big steamers, for the *City of Mexico* had now come up, there arose a mighty roar of recognition for the plucky rescue. From the *Mexico's* signal halliards a message of congratulation was fluttering as the *Tropic Queen's* boat started back for her ship. In the wireless coop, Sam and the *City of Mexico's*

operator were busy exchanging comments by radio.

The aviator soon recovered and was able to talk to Jack as the boat crew pulled back. His name was Ramon de Garros, and he was a young Frenchman. He was making the flight from Palm Beach to Havana in the flying-boat in the interests of a hotel company owning giant hostelries in both places.

He had set out the day before, thinking to finish the flight within a few hours. Instead, an accident to his engine had compelled him to alight on the surface of the ocean. Then adverse winds had driven him far off his course, and finally his gasoline had given out. He luckily had a wireless apparatus on board, a new, light device with which he had been experimenting for the government. If it had not been for this, his chance of rescue would have been slim.

The rails of the ship were lined with men and women who gave the returning rescuers a hearty

roar of welcome as they drew alongside. De Garros, with the volatility of a true Frenchman, waved his hand to show that he was not injured. This brought another cheer.

The boat was hoisted home and the crowd pressed about it as Jack clambered out and extended his hand to De Garros, who was still feeble from his trying experience. Men and women tried to grasp Jack's hand, but he brushed past them, feeling awkward and embarrassed as he conducted De Garros to the captain's cabin.

In the crowd was Miss Jarrold, and as they passed her, to Jack's astonishment, she and De Garros exchanged looks of unmistakable recognition. The girl turned away the next instant, but De Garros exclaimed to Jack:

"What is that young lady doing on this ship?"

"She is accompanying her uncle," rejoined Jack. "I believe they are on a pleasure cruise."

"Her uncle is on board?"

There was a note almost of anxiety in the rescued aviator's voice as he put the question.

"Yes. You know him?"

The reply astonished Jack. De Garros' tone was more than vehement as he rejoined:

"Know him! I know him too well! I—but never mind about that now."

Jack had no time to ask questions; indeed, he would have considered it impertinent to have done so. They now reached the captain's cabin and that dignitary himself came forward to greet De Garros. The aviator explained that he wished to be transported to Kingston, Jamaica, which was the first port of call of the *Tropic Queen,* and that there he would cable for money for his passage and so forth.

Captain McDonald greeted him warmly, and clothes from the wardrobe of the third officer, who was about his size, were found for De Garros, who was beginning to shiver, warm though the air was. Jack had to hurry off to relieve

Sam at the key. As he left, he and De Garros shook hands warmly.

"I shall see more of you," said the young Frenchman.

"I hope so," responded Jack. "I should like to hear more about your air voyage, when you have time."

"I can always make time for the man who saved my life," was the rejoinder of the aërial castaway.

"Oh, shucks!" exclaimed Jack, not being able to think of anything else to say.

Then he hurried back on the job. Half an hour later, in dry clothes, he was at his key again and exchanging joshes with the operator of the *Mexico*, as both the stately crafts stood on their courses once more after participating in what was, probably, the first rescue of an aërial castaway on record.

CHAPTER XIX.

A CALL IN THE NIGHT.

Sapphire days of steaming through deep blue tropic seas beneath a cloudless sky passed by dreamily. The *Tropic Queen* was now in the Caribbean, rolling lazily southward through azure water flecked with golden patches of gulf weed—looking like marine golden-rod. Fleeing flocks of flying fish scuttered over the water as the steamer's sharp bow nosed into the stuff, like a covey of partridges rising from cover before a sportsman's gun.

To Jack and Sam, making their first voyage in these waters, everything was new and fascinating. They never tired of leaning over the rail, watching the different forms of marine life that were to be seen almost every moment.

Jack had succeeded in attaching a bell to the

wireless apparatus, which, while it did not sound powerfully when a wireless wave beat against the antennæ, yet answered its purpose so long as they were in the vicinity of the wireless room. Jack had hopes, in time, of perfecting a device which would give a sharp, insistent ring and awaken even the soundest sleeper. The boy knew that on many small steamers only one wireless operator is, from motives of economy, carried. When such an operator is asleep, therefore, the wireless "ears" of his ship are deaf. But with an alarm bell, such as Jack hoped to bring to perfection, there would be no danger of the man's not awakening in time to avert what might prove to be grave disaster.

They now began to steam past small islands, bare, desolate spots for the most part, but surrounded by waters clear as crystal and gleaming like jewels. Some of them were covered with a sparse sort of brush, but generally they were mere specks of sand in a glowing sea of azure.

One evening Jack was sitting at the key, when through the air there came, beating at his ears, a wireless summons. Such messages were common enough and the boy languidly, for the night was stiflingly hot, reached out a hand for his pencil in order to jot down whatever might be coming.

But the next instant he was sitting bolt upright, sending out with strong, nervous fingers a crashing reply to the message that had come to him.

"To any ship in vicinity," it read. "Send us a boat-load of provisions and water or we shall perish."

"Who are you?" flashed Jack's key in reply.

Feebly, as if the supply of juice was running low, the mysterious sender of the urgent appeal sent back his answer.

"The Sombrero Island Light. The monthly provision boat has not arrived from the mainland. We are almost destitute."

Jack looked up at his wireless map. Sure enough, on a tiny speck of land not far off, was marked in blue, with a red star, the location of the island light, the coloring denoting that, like many modern lighthouses, it was equipped with wireless.

"How many of you are there?" inquired Jack's radio.

"Two. But my partner, an old man, is bedridden from suffering. I have not slept for many nights and am almost exhausted."

"Keep up your courage," rejoined Jack, "and I'll see what I can do."

He hurried forward with his message to the bridge. He found the captain taking his ease in slippers and pajamas outside the sacred precincts of his cabin. Jack told him briefly about the communication he had had, and then handed the skipper the notes he had made of the radio conversation.

The captain looked annoyed. A frown furrowed his forehead.

"Confound it all," he muttered, "I was making up my mind for a record run and this means delay. But we can't neglect to aid those unfortunates who are probably suffering the pangs of hunger and thirst at this very moment."

He paused as if reflecting, while Jack stood by respectfully. The captain had not dismissed him, and the boy judged that he was considering some plan.

"Come into the chart room," he said presently; and Jack followed him through a doorway into the chart room where the sea-maps were stowed neatly away in overhead racks.

The captain took down one. Jack saw that it showed the Caribbean. With a brown forefinger the captain checked off the course of the *Tropic Queen* and her present whereabouts, as marked that day by the chief officer when the log was written up.

"No chance of getting this ship anywhere within ten miles of the island," he said, after he had examined the soundings carefully. "It is one of the worst places charted in these seas."

"You mean it is unapproachable, sir?" asked Jack.

"Yes, to a degree. It is surrounded by shoals and reefs. It would be suicide to try to navigate a ship of this size amongst them."

"What can be done then, sir?" asked Jack, who knew that he would have to send a reply to the lighthouse keepers.

"We shall be about twenty miles to the east of the island early to-morrow morning," said the captain. "You may inform them that I shall send off a boat and perhaps the doctor, if I can spare him."

"Very well, sir."

Jack started away, but then lingered.

"Well, what is it?"

The captain swung around in his chair and looked at the boy who hesitated in the doorway.

"I—I wondered if it would be possible for me to go along with the boat, sir?" asked Jack haltingly. There was something very disconcerting in that direct glance of the captain's.

"In the boat, you mean?"

"Yes, sir. You see they have wireless there. I might be of some use. I——"

"There, don't bother to make excuses," laughed the captain good-humoredly. "You really want to go for the sake of the trip, don't you?"

"Well, I——" began Jack, feeling rather foolish at having his mind read so unerringly.

"Will your assistant stand watch if I let you go? The ship must not be left without a wireless man."

"Sam will stay, sir," rejoined Jack. "It is his watch, anyway."

"All right, then, consider it settled. Cut along

now and send out that message. Those poor devils must be waiting eagerly for it."

"Very well, sir, and thank you," exclaimed the delighted Jack.

"Don't thank me," said the captain, with a gruffness that a twinkle in his eye betrayed. "I heard before you joined the ship that you had a faculty for rushing in where you had no business to be, and now I see that I was not misinformed."

CHAPTER XX.

TO THE RESCUE.

"Aren't you going to turn in?"

Sam asked the question as, at midnight, he came on watch. He took his position at the key, but, to his surprise, Jack did not show his usual alacrity to seek his bunk.

"I guess I'll sit up a while," rejoined Jack, without a trace of drowsiness.

Then he added, as Sam looked his bewilderment, "Sammy, my boy, just cast your eye over those copies of radios I got and answered while you were asleep."

Sam obeyed, scanning the despatches and the answers to them, copied in carbon, with deep interest. When he had finished he looked up.

"I can guess the reason for your staying up now," he said.

"Well?" asked Jack, his eyes dancing.

"You're going along in that boat!"

"A good guess," laughed Jack. "You don't mind, do you, Sam?"

"Not a bit. If you will insist on risking your neck, it's no affair of mine," laughed Sam.

"Hum, you're a nice, sympathetic little friend, aren't you?" inquired Jack, giving Sam a dig in the ribs. "But seriously, though," he added, "you don't think it selfish of me to go off alone and——"

"Get a ducking?" chuckled Sam. "No, I don't. I'd rather be comfortable here on board than trying to make a landing on an island beach. It's ten to one you get tipped over in the surf."

"Not much danger of that," said Jack; "we've got some skillful oarsmen in the crew, and you know that boat drill is one of the fads of this line."

"Well, what time do you expect to start?"

"Haven't any idea, but the skipper said we ought to be up with the island by dawn."

"If I were you, I'd turn in and get some sleep."

"Couldn't take a wink. I'm too keyed up about the trip."

Jack looked at his watch, the fine gold one that had been presented to him in Antwerp on his first voyage, in recognition of a brave deed.

"Not one o'clock yet," he muttered impatiently.

"It won't be light for four hours anyhow," counseled Sam; "you'd better get into your bunk."

But Jack was so fearful of being left behind that he refused to turn in. However, after a time, as he sat in the spare chair of the wireless room, his eyelids did close in spite of all he could do to prevent them.

Sam smiled as, turning around, he saw that his chum was asleep.

It was Schultz, the old quartermaster, who

aroused Jack by poking his head into the door of the wireless room.

"Ahoy, vere is dot Yack vot vants to go midt us py der Somprero Lighdt?"

Jack awakened with a start.

"Eh? What?" he demanded sleepily.

"Vell, don't you vant to go midt us py der Somprero?" asked Schultz. "Oder dot you schleep?"

Broad awake now, Jack sprang to his feet.

"All right, Schultz, I'll be with you in a jiffy," he exclaimed.

"Don't make no nefer mindt aboudt gedtting prettied oop," grinned the old quartermaster grimly, as Jack plunged his face into a basin of cold water and parted his tousled hair; "maype vee gedt idt a spill in der vater before ve gedt back der ship py."

"There, what did I tell you?" demanded Sam triumphantly; but Jack only grinned.

There was a great trampling about on the

decks outside. The men who had been selected to form the boat's crew, the pick of the sailors, were running about, loading the small craft with provisions and barrels of fresh water.

To the men this sudden call for a trip to the shore came in the nature of a junket. It afforded an agreeable bit of relaxation in the midst of the hum-drum monotony of sea life. A sailor on such an expedition is like a boy off on a picnic. The men joked and laughed as, in the gray of the early light, they hustled about between boat and storeroom.

Dr. Flynn, to Jack's disappointment, was unable to go. A sick patient on board demanded all his attention. But he put up a case of medicines for the old light keeper and gave Jack directions how to administer them; for, by means of the old man's symptoms, transmitted by wireless through Jack, the doctor of the *Tropic Queen* had been able to diagnose the trouble as being a case of tropic fever.

At last all was ready, and a few early-rising passengers saw the boat lowered and pulled away for the dim speck of land on the far horizon that marked the site of Sombrero Island. A few moments later the stopping of the *Tropic Queen's* engines aroused the other passengers, and before the breakfast bugle blew, the ship was humming with conjecture and surmise as to the reason for the sudden check in the voyage.

A bulletin, posted by the captain's orders, dispelled the mystery. It also announced that the boat was expected back by evening at the latest.

CHAPTER XXI.

A TALE OF THE SEA.

The boat, urged by strong arms, fairly flew over the water. Quartermaster Schultz served out breakfast to the crew in relays, for no time had been taken for eating before they started. Jack felt in high spirits. The morning was clear and quite cool. The scorching heat of the day would not come till later, when the sun rose higher.

"Ach, idt vos a badt ding to be on a lighdthouse midout help from der supply boat undt not knowing if you vill lif or die," said the old quartermaster, as he sat in the stern sheets with Jack. "I rememper ven I vos younger vunce I vos tired of der sea undt ships, undt I take idt a yob on a lighdthouse off der coast of Oregon on der Bacific.

"Der Big Boint Lighdt vos its name. It vos known as vun of der loneliest of all der lighdts on dot rocky coast. Budt I didn't care about dot, or I dought I didn't. Der pay vos goodt undt dere vos annunder keeper, an oldt man, oldt enough to be mein fadder, I reckon.

"Vell, der supply boat idt take me to der lighdt, budt a badt storm came up after dey hadt landed me, undt dey had to go avay again. To get to der lighdt from der schmall boat dey sendt me ashore in, I hadt to be hoisted oop in a sordt of basket from der boat by a derrick. Der lighdt vos just as lonely as I hadt heardt idt vos. Idt stood on a big rock vich formed der endt of a sordt of peninsula of rocks dot ran out two miles from der shore.

"Idt vos buildt of stone undt lookedt strong undt substantial. Idt needed to pe so, I dought, as I lookedt aboudt me undt sized der place oop.

"Der oldt man on der lighdt, his name vos Abbott, velcomed me. He vos a fine-looking oldt

man, midt pale blue eyes undt a long white beard. After de boat hadt left, pecause of der rising sea, der oldt man toldt me dot ve vos in for a badt storm.

" 'Let idt come,' said I, 'dis tower is as strong aber der rock idt is built on. Nuddings can harm idt.'

"He didn't say nuddings, budt showed me my quarters vich vos in der lower pardt of de tower. Den he took me oop to show me der lamp, an oil burner midt a two minute flash.

" 'Many a poor sould vill bless dis lamp to-nighdt,' he saidt to me, undt den he vent on to tell me dot his son vos a sailor on de China run on a pig tea clipper.

" 'He is homevard boundt now, undt ought to pe off dis coast to-nighdt,' he said. 'His ship runs into Portlandt.'

"Vell, ve cooked our supper undt ate idt vhile der sea oudtside kept rising undt der windt hadt a sordt of a moan in idt dot made you dink of

somepody in bain. I couldt see dot ve vere in for a mighty badt nighdt. After ve had eaten, der oldt man, his name vos Abbott, climbed oop der tower undt lighted der lamps.

"Den he sedt in motion der clockvurk dot kept der lighdt revolving all t'rough der nighdt giffing oudt der regular flashes, as sedt down on der charts. Ven dot vos done dere vosn't much to do budt to smoke undt talk. Der oldt man vosn't much of a handt for talking, budt aboudt his son he had a lodt to say. Vot a fine poy he vos, undt how he vos going to try to gedt him to leave der sea after dot voyage, der oldt man knowing der sea undt how efery voyage may pe a sailor's last. He showed me his picture, too. A fine figure of a poy. Ach, yes, undt to dink of vot vos to happen dot night! Poor oldt Abbott, dot vos many years ago, budt I can hear him still telling me aboudt his poy Harry, undt vot a fine poy he vos.

"Vell, py der time idt vos my turn to go to bed

der vind vos howling undt tearing roundt der lighdt like a pack of wolves. Der sea vos gedtting oop, too. You could hear idt roar like vild beasts roundt der place. I foundt myself being mighty gladt dot der tower vos of solidt stone. Nudding else couldt have stoodt idt.

"Outside der lighdt vos a small stone shanty. In dis vos der boiler vich made der fog-horn blow. Oldt man Abbott toldt me pefore I go to bedt dot I hadt bedder start der fires oop undter der boiler, so dot if anyting happened to der lighdt ve vould still be able to varn der ships.

"Ven I open der door to go to der boiler room der vind almost knocks me off my feedt. Der spray blows in my face like knives. Der sea vos all vhite, like idt vos boiling. I dell you, dot vos a nighdt, budt idt vos nudding to vot vos to come.

"I got steam oop undt banked der fires. Den I turned in till oldt man Abbott should rouse me for my vatch. I didn't sleep much, vhat vith der devils howling of vind, and der roar of der

sea. Ven oldt man Abbott vake me, he say dot I shall come oop into der lantern.

"I hurried on a few clo'es and climbed oop. Himmel! At der top of der tower you couldt feel dot stone shake, der vind vos so fierce! Oldt man Abbott, he vos yust sitting dere saying nudding, budt staring out. He didn't turn ven I came in, budt yust kept on staring. Budt at last he turn round to me undt holdt oop vun of his vingers, solemn like.

" 'Hark!' he say.

" 'I don't can hear idt nuddings,' I saidt.

"He shook his oldt vhite head.

" 'Don't you hear dem calling?' he saidt. 'Listen!'

"I began to dink dot der oldt man hadt gone crazy, as lighdt keepers sometimes do. For der life of me I could hear nuddings budt der vind undt der sea. All at vonce a vave came crashing against der glass of der lantern. You could hear der vater swish undt crash on der lenses.

"Der tower shook as if idt hadt been struck a blow. I pegan to feel a bidt scared. A few more vaves like dot undt nudding dot man buildt could standt idt. Budt oldt man Abbott, he say nudding. Py undt py I saw his lips move undt I dought maype he vos praying.

"I not interrupt him budt come downstairs again. I know I must see to der furnace under der boiler in der vistle house. But ven I opened der door I vos blown in again. Dot vind vos so strong dot idt drove me righdt back, undt I vos a strong young man den, too, midt my muscles hardened on ships all ofer der vurld. I saw dot if I vanted to endt idt my life, all I had to do vos to try to gedt to dot boiler house. So I gif idt oop, undt come in py der tower again.

"I go oop py der lighdt. Ach, it vos terrible oop dere! Der seas vos so pig dot dey sweep righdt ofer der tower. Small rocks undt stones hammered against der lenses till you vould haf

dought dey must be smashed in! Budt dey vere of t'ick, strong glass undt dey stoodt idt.

"Oldt man Abbott, he asks me to go pelow undt gedt him some coffee. Py dot time idt is gedtting on toward morning. Der storm is schreeching undt howling undt ramping like ten t'ousand teufels. Sometimes ven a big vave hit der tower idt shake like dere vos an eart'quake gotd idt in its teef!

" 'Schultz,' I say by meinselfs, 'you are one pig fool, mein fine fellow, to leave der sea. Aber idt is bedder to die on a goodt ship dan in der wreck of a lighdthouse.'

"I haf youst aboudt godt der coffee ready ven der oldt man comes down. Dere vos a vild look in his eyes like he hadt seen a ghost.

" 'Dere's a ship, a fine ship, she's driven ashore on der Squabs,' he said. Der Squabs peing vot ve called der long neck of small rocks petween der Big Lighdt undt der shore.

" 'Impossible!' saidt I. 'Ve vould half heardt

idt der rockets aber der guns if such hadt been der case.'

"'Pelief idt or nodt as you like,' he said, 'budt dere is a ship ashore. I heardt der poor soulds on her screaming undt praying.'

"I looked at him, dinking he had suddenly gone crazy. Budt he looked quite sane undt serious.

"'Idt is a terrible ding,' he said, 'to die like dot midtoudt a grave budt der sea to lay your headt in, till der judgment day ven der good book tells us dere shall pe no more sea.'

"'Mr. Abbott,' I saidt, 'I dink you hadt bedder dake your coffee undt go to bedt. You are overtired.'

"'I shall keep oop till der storm dies oudt,' he saidt, undt I shall nefer forget his voice as he saidt dot. 'I must see vot ship dot vos dot drove ashore.'

"Suddenly, above us, ve heardt a terrible noise as if der lighdthouse vos peing torn to bits. Idt came from der oopper pardt of der tower. I

rushed to der foot of der steps undt vos medt py a rush of vater.

"As idt swept py me idt almost knocked me off my feedt! Righdt avay I know vot hadt happened. A big vave hadt smashed in der light, or more likely a big rock, hurled py der vave, hadt done der damage.

"Midt oldt man Abbott close behindt me, I fought my vay oop der steps.

"Himmel! I nefer forget vot ve findt!

"Der whole top of der lantern, idt hadt been cut off as if py a knife! Only ragged edges of stone showed vhere idt hadt been. Der lighdthouse vos no longer a lighdthouse, undt vos of no goodt to varn ships of der danger.

"As ve stoodt dere annuder big vave come sweeping ofer undt half drowned us. A big rock just missed mein headt, undt der vater go pouring down der stairs like a cascade.

" 'Ve must go pelow undt shut der door at der

bottom of der stairs,' I say; 'uddervise ve pe drowned oudt.'

"Der oldt man nodded as if he only half understoodt.

" 'Yah, yah; drowned, drowned, drowned,' he saidt to himself; 'drowned like der poor folk on der wreck.'

"I got him down der stairs pefore annuder big vave come, undt den shut der door so dot no more big vaves come into der room. Budt der place vos a sight! Dere vos six inches of vater in dere vich hadn't flowed oudt unter der door. Budt liddle by liddle idt drained oudt.

"No more big vaves come. Idt look as if der storm, hafing wrecked der lighdthouse, vos content to lie down undt pe quiet for a vhile. Bimeby, ven der vind drop, I go out py der boiler house.

"Idt hadt gone! Vere idt hadt stood dere vos nudding! Dose vaves hadt taken idt off der rock as if idt hadt been a shellfish!

"'Ach, dis is badt,' I say to meinself. 'Der lighdthouse is wrecked undt I lose my yob!'

"Der storm died down fast, undt py der time idt vos daylighdt, dere being nuddings to do budt to sit round undt vait for der supply boat to come back, I dropped off into a soundt sleep. I vakened oop an hour or two later. Der kitchen vere ve hadt been sitting vos empty. I vent up into der ruins of der lamp, budt oldt man Abbott vos not dere eidder.

"I call for him budt dere comes no answer. Den I go oudtside on der rock undt I findt him. He is lying very still on der edge of der vater. Close py him is a big log vich look like part of der spar of a ship. Preddy soon I see dat dere is someting on der spar, undt I look undt see dot idt is a man. He is quite dead, dat I see by a look adt his face.

"Den I look again. Undt den I see vy oldt man Abbott lies so still on der edge of der rock.

Der face of der man on der spar vos der face of his son Harry! Undt oldt man Abbott is deadt.

"Der ship dot der oldt man, in some mysterious vay, heardt drive to her death on der rocks, vos his son's ship, der vun on vich he vos making his homevard voyage. Vell, for a day I stay on der rock midt der dead fadder undt der deadt son, undt den der relief ship come. Dey bury der oldt man undt der boy side py side der next day, undt I leave dot part of der country; undt since den I nefer see a lighdthouse budt I dink of oldt man Abbott undt der homevard bound son he never saw."

Not long after the conclusion of the old sailor's story, which left him glum and taciturn, the white spiral of the Sombrero Island Light came into view, sticking up like a finger on the sandy islet whose name it bore. As they drew closer, Jack could make out a solitary figure on the beach. It was the light keeper, who was soon greeting them with heartfelt gratitude. He was

probably a young man, but the anxiety he had been through had aged him in a few nights.

While the sailors were unloading the provisions and water, for drinking water on that desolate island could only be caught in tanks when it rained, Jack visited the other light keeper. He found him much better than he had been when the wireless message was sent out. In fact, after some of the remedies Dr. Flynn had sent had been administered, he declared he would be strong enough to go about his duty that night.

The light keepers explained that they were doubly anxious for a sight of the relief ship, for her appearance meant that they would go on a month's vacation, their places to be taken by two other men the relief craft was bringing out. Before they left the island, Jack had the satisfaction of spying a distant sail on the horizon. The light keeper, who was up and about, scrutinized it through his glass. He broke into an exclamation of thankfulness the next minute.

"It's the old *Solitaire,* sure enough!" he cried. "She must have been delayed by storms."

"Looks as if one of der top masdts, idt has been carried avay," declared Schultz, who had borrowed the glass.

"Is the *Solitaire* the relief ship?" asked Jack.

"Yes; the same old schooner that always comes. Oh, won't Barney be glad! It'll be better to him than medicine." And the keeper of the light ran toward the tower to tell his companion the good news.

And so, as they rowed back to the ship, they left the light keepers happy, but nevertheless old Schultz shook his head as he spoke of them.

"Aber, I'd radder pe a sea-cook dan a keeper py a lighdthouse," he said with deep conviction; and added, nodding his head solemnly, "I know."

CHAPTER XXII.

A DECOY MESSAGE.

The following days passed quickly and pleasantly. The friendship between De Garros and Jack ripened, being nourished, of course, by their mutual interest in wireless, of which De Garros was a capable exponent. He did not revert again to the subject of any previous acquaintance with Jarrold and his niece and, seeing his reticence concerning it, Jack avoided the topic.

At last Jamaica was sighted on the horizon. Some hours later they were steaming through a deep blue sea along brilliantly green shores, above which rose rugged peaks and mountains. Jack and Sam gazed with delight at the scene as it unrolled.

The big steamer slowly rounded the long, sandy arm of Port Royal and took on the black

pilot. Then she proceeded up the harbor, following a twisted, tortuous channel, past mangrove swamps, ruined batteries and rankly growing royal palms.

As soon as the ship had docked, Jack and Sam both received leave to go ashore. As may be imagined, they did not waste much time on preparations, but were on the deck almost as soon as the gang-plank was down. Most of the passengers followed their example, and as but few of the ship's company were leaving the *Tropic Queen* at Kingston, the quaint town, with its cement stores and hotels, its dusty streets and swarming negroes, was soon thronged with sightseers.

Jack and Sam chartered one of the hacks that are everywhere present in the town, and ordered the driver to show them about the city. They found that while the main town was business-like and substantial with its concrete structures and stores, the back streets still showed abundant

evidences of the earthquake, which some years ago shook down most of the city and caused a tremendous loss of life.

Some of the houses looked as if they had been shell-ridden. The roofs had fallen in, showing the bare rafters. Walls were cracked, and in some places the entire front was out of a house, revealing the interior of the bare rooms.

"I don't see very much that is interesting here," said Jack at length. "Suppose we go back to the hotel that was recommended to us?"

"I'm agreeable," said Sam. "So far, my chief impression of Kingston is dust and noisy niggers."

The order was given to the black driver, and they were soon rolling back to the hotel that Jack had mentioned. It was a picturesque structure in the Spanish style of architecture, which harmonized well with the tropic gardens surrounding it. Passing through the lobby, where they stopped to buy postcards, the boys found them-

selves in a palm grove facing the blue waters of the harbor.

A delightful breeze rustled through the palms and the boys contentedly threw themselves into chairs and ordered two lemonades. They sipped them slowly while they enjoyed the view and the shade. Many others from the ship had found their way there, too. Among them was Colonel Minturn with a party of friends.

He passed the boys with a friendly nod. He had hardly gone by, when Jack, who had happened to look around, gave a start.

Standing behind a palm and watching the Minturn party intently, was Jarrold. The trunk of the tree afforded him ample protection from the observation of the man he was watching with an unwavering scrutiny.

Apparently he had not seen the boys. Jack nudged Sam and gave him a whispered warning not to turn around.

"Jarrold is there, watching Colonel Minturn. He is plotting some mischief. I am sure of it."

"Wherever he is, there is trouble," agreed Sam.

"That's just where you are right," replied Jack.

"Is his pretty niece with him?" inquired Jack's companion.

"I don't see her. By the way, I wonder where De Garros met them. Queer that, although they know each other, as De Garros admits, they never speak."

"They probably met abroad somewhere," hazarded Sam.

"I suppose so," was the reply, and then the talk drifted to other subjects. But Jack had shifted his chair so as to watch Jarrold without appearing to do so. Before long, the man turned and strolled in the direction of a terrace which opened on the palm garden.

Jack half rose from his chair as if he intended to follow him.

"What's the trouble?" asked Sam.

"I don't mean to let Jarrold out of my sight, that's all," said Jack. "But look! He has stopped. He is talking to someone. That chap in a sun helmet. I can't see his face, but somehow he looks mighty familiar to me."

The young man who had joined Jarrold strolled along the terrace with him till they both found chairs. Then they sat down and seemed to be engaged in earnest conversation. The stranger, who yet seemed familiar to Jack, had his back turned to them so that it was impossible to see his features.

At length they arose, shook hands as if they had come to an agreement on some matter, and parted. Jarrold came into the garden and took a seat at a table. He scowled heavily at the boys as he passed them, but gave no other sign of recognition. Suddenly Jack rose to his feet.

"I'm a fine chump!" he exclaimed. "I ought to have brought my camera along. Hanged if I didn't forget it!"

"Why don't you go back to the ship for it?" asked Sam. "It's not very far. You can get there and back in twenty minutes or less if you drive."

"That part of it is all right. But I hate to leave His Nibs, there, unwatched."

"Oh, as for that, I'll take care of him till you get back," Sam promised.

"Bully for you! Then I'll go. And say——"

But at that moment a page came into the garden. He was calling for "Mr. Ready."

"Means me, I guess," laughed Jack, "although it sounds new to be called 'Mr. Ready.' What do you want?" he asked, stopping the boy.

"You are Mr. Ready? All right then, there's a telephone message for you. You're wanted back on the ship as soon as possible."

"That's a funny coincidence," murmured Jack; "just as I was ready to go, too."

As the page hurried off, Jack turned to Sam:

"I can't think what they can want me for;

still, orders are orders. You stay here and watch His Nibs yonder, then, Sam, till I get back. If he goes anywhere, follow him, but don't take any chances. He's got no great love for either of us, I fancy."

"Well, I guess not, after the pummeling you gave him," laughed Sam.

Jack hurried off. Orders were orders, and although he could not imagine what he could be wanted for on board the *Tropic Queen,* he knew that it was his duty to obey at once. But, to his astonishment, when he reached the ship he found that there had been no message for him so far as anybody knew. All the ship's officers were ashore and the ship deserted, except for the crew unloading the bulky cargo, while black stevedores sung and swore and steam winches rattled and roared to the accompaniment of the harsh screaming of the bos'n's pipe.

A good deal puzzled, Jack was retracing his steps to the hotel and the pleasant coolness of

the garden, when he was suddenly accosted by a young man who stepped from around the corner of a building.

"Hello there, Jack Ready! Well, if I'm not glad to see you!"

It was Ralph Cummings, the operator whose place had been taken by Sam Smalley on Jack's recommendation.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FALSE FRIENDSHIP.

Jack had no great liking for Cummings. In fact, at the time the latter lost his job on the *Tropic Queen,* he had left in a rage, swearing that he would "get even."

But now he held out his hand with a frank smile, or one that was intended to be frank but was not, for Cummings hadn't that kind of a face. He was about Jack's age, with sandy hair, low, rather receding forehead and shifty, light eyes that had a habit of looking on the ground when he spoke.

"Well, well, Ready," he exclaimed. "It's good to see a face from home."

"Thanks," said Jack, "but if I recollect rightly you were not so crazy about seeing me again, the last time we met."

He instinctively distrusted this fellow. There was something assumed, something that did not ring true about his apparent heartiness.

"Oh, come now, Ready, here we are thousands of miles from home and you're still holding that old grudge against me! Shake hands, man, and forget it."

Jack began to feel rather ashamed of his brusqueness. After all, Cummings might be more unfortunate in manner than intentionally unpleasant.

"That's all right, Cummings," he said, extending his hand. "I'm glad to see you, too. Here on a ship?"

"Yes, a small one, though. Not a liner like the *Tropic Queen,* but it was the best I could get."

Jack felt a twinge of remorse. Cummings said this uncomplainingly and yet with an emphasis that made Jack feel uncomfortable. The man was incompetent, it was true, but still, Jack al-

most began to think that he ought to have given him another chance.

"When did you get in?" pursued Cummings.

"This morning. We'll lie here two days, I guess. We've got a big cargo."

"Is that so? Well, I hope we'll see a lot of each other."

"I hope so, too," said Jack, without, however, very much cordiality.

"Well, come and have a drink before you go," suggested Cummings.

"Thanks, but I never drink. I think it would be better for you, too, Cummings, if you did not touch liquor."

"Oh, I didn't mean that. I wanted you to try some cola. It's a native drink. They make it here. It's very cool and nice."

Jack had been walking fast and was hot. The idea appealed to his thirsty, dust-filled throat.

"All right, Cummings. Where do you go?" he said.

"Down here. We could get it at a soda fountain in the drug store yonder; but it's better in the native quarter right down this street."

He motioned down the side street from which he had emerged when Jack encountered him.

"All right; but I can't stay long. I've got a friend waiting for me."

"That's all right," Cummings assured him. "It's not more than a block and you can take a short cut back to the hotel to save time."

They walked down a curious narrow street with high-walled gardens on either side. Over the tops of the walls, in some places, great creepers straggled, spangled with gorgeous red and purple flowers. In other spots, drooping above the walls could be seen the giant fronds of banana plants, or tenuous palm tree tops.

Cummings stopped in front of a plaster house, badly cracked by the earthquake.

"Right in here," he said.

Jack followed him into the dark, cool interior.

After the blinding glare of the sun outside, it was hard at first to make out the surroundings. But Jack's eyes soon became accustomed to the gloom, and he saw that they were in a small room with a polished floor and that two or three chairs and tables were scattered about.

An old negro woman of hideous appearance, with one eye and two solitary teeth gleaming out of her sooty, black face, shuffled in. She wore a calico dress and a red bandana handkerchief and was smoking a home-made cigar.

Cummings, who seemed quite at home in the place, greeted her as Mother Jenny. He ordered "two colas."

"Great place this, eh?" said Cummings with easy familiarity, leaning back. "You know I've made several voyages to the tropics, and when I'm in Kingston I always like to come in here. There's a sort of local color about it."

"And a lot of local dirt, too," commented Jack, rather disgustedly sniffing at the atmosphere,

which was an odd combination of stale tobacco smoke, mustiness and a peculiar odor inseparable from the native quarters of tropical cities.

However, the cola, when it arrived, quite made up for all these deficiencies. It was served in carved calabashes and tasted like a sort of sublimated soda pop.

"Great stuff, eh?" said Cummings, gulping his with great relish.

"It is good," admitted Jack. "You'd be a lot better off, Cummings, if you only drank this sort of stuff."

"Now don't preach, Ready," was the rejoinder. "You can't be a man and not drink liquor."

"That might have been true a hundred years ago, but it certainly isn't to-day," retorted Jack. "The great corporations won't hire men who drink. It's gone out of date. The man who drinks is putting himself on the toboggan slide."

"Say, you ought to have been in the Salvation

Army," said Cummings, with what amounted to a veiled sneer.

Strangely enough Jack did not resent this. His head felt very heavy suddenly. The bright patch of sunlight outside began to sway and waver queerly.

"I—I don't feel very well," he said presently in a feeble tone.

"Must be the sun," said Cummings. "I'd better call a hack and take you to the hotel. The sun often effects newcomers like that."

"I wish you'd get a rig," said Jack feebly, preventing himself from falling forward on the table only by a rigid effort.

Cummings jumped to his feet and hurried from the place.

"That native stuff worked quicker than I thought," he muttered. "Now to get a rig and meet Jarrold. I guess he'll think I've done a good job. Anyhow, I'm getting square on that conceited young fool for losing me my position."

CHAPTER XXIV.

KIDNAPPED.

A rig was passing and Cummings hailed the driver.

"There's a sick man in here and I want you to give me a hand to get him out, and drive where I tell you," he said. "You'll be paid well if you don't ask questions."

"Dere's been berry many sick mans come out'n Mother Jenny's," volunteered the man with a grin as he pulled up his aged horse.

"You just keep your mouth shut. That's all I want you to do," said Cummings with a scowl.

"Oh, berry well, Busha," said the black with a grin.

"Wait here, I'll be out in a minute," said Ralph Cummings. He hurried back into the unsavory interior of the place and presently issued

again, supporting Jack, who was reeling and swaying from side to side and who gazed about him with a vacant expression.

It was at this moment that a dapper little man came hastening along the street.

"Good gracious, can it be possible that that is Jack Ready in such a condition?" he exclaimed. "Being led out of a low dram shop! It's incredible! I'd not believe it if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes."

He bustled up to Cummings, who was just putting Jack into the cab, where the young wireless boy collapsed, breathing heavily and rolling his eyes stupidly about.

"My friend, pardon me," he exclaimed, addressing Cummings, "but my name is De Garros. I am a friend of this young man's from the *Tropic Queen.* In fact I owe my life to him. Is he ill?"

"Ill nothing! He's just taken a drop too much. Sea-faring men often do."

De Garros threw up his hands in horror.

"I would never have believed it," he cried incredulously; "yet it must be true! Ready, are you ill?"

Jack mumbled something incoherently in rejoinder. De Garros looked his disgust.

"What did I tell you?" sneered Cummings. "I'm taking him to a hotel. He'll be all right in a few hours."

"I am glad he has a friend to take care of him," declared the dapper little aviator, and he hurried on, shaking his head over the intemperance which he had been led by Cummings to believe was the cause of Jack's plight.

"That's another spoke in your wheel, my lad," muttered Cummings as he got in beside the now senseless youth. "I don't know who your friend is, but he won't think much of you after this, if, indeed, he ever sees you again."

He leaned forward and gave a direction to the driver.

"Drive out along the Castle Road," he said, mentioning an unfrequented road that led to the outskirts of Kingston.

The darky nodded. All these queer proceedings were none of his business. Their road led through the negro quarter of the town and they passed hardly a white face. Such negroes as they encountered merely stared stolidly at the white-faced, reeling youth seated at Cummings' side.

By and by the houses began to thin out. Then, in the distance, down the dusty road, they came in view of an automobile halted at the roadside.

"Stop at that car," ordered Cummings.

"At dat mobolbubbul?" asked the black.

"That's what I said, you inky-faced idiot," snapped Cummings.

"My, my, dayt am a nice gen'mums, fo' sho'," muttered the old darky. "Ah don' jes' lak de looks ob dese circumloquoshons nohow, an' Ah

am goin' ter keep mah eyes wide open. Yes, sah, jes' dat berry ting."

By the side of the halted car stood Jarrold. He wore a broad Panama hat and a long white dust coat.

"Well, you got him, I see," said Jarrold, with an evil grin that showed all his tusk-like teeth, as the darky's rickety old vehicle came to a halt.

"Yes, it was like taking candy from a child," responded Cummings. "Now if you'll just give me a lift in with him, governor, we'll get started."

Between them, the two rascals half pushed, half carried Jack's limp form into the back of the auto. Jarrold dug down into his pockets.

"This is the right road for the Lion's Mouth, isn't it?" he demanded of the darky. "It's years since I was there and I've forgotten much about it."

The black looked at him with dropping jaw.

"De Lion's Mouf out by der ole castle, Busha?" he asked.

"Yes, of course," was the impatient response. "This is the right road?"

"Oh, yas, sah, yas, sah," sputtered the driver.

Jarrold gave him a big bill and told him to "keep his mouth shut with that." The darky looked at the bill and his eyes rolled with astonishment.

"Dere's suthin' wrong hyer," he muttered as he climbed into his rickety old rig and prepared to drive back to town. "Hones' folks wouldn' give ole Black Strap dat amoun' uv money fo' dat lilly bitty ride 'less dey was suthin' fishy. Reckon Ah'll do some 'vestigatin' when Ah gits back to der town."

In the meantime, Jarrold had taken the driver's seat of the car and Cummings sat beside him. In a cloud of dust they started down the road, the old darky gazing after them till long after they had passed out of sight.

Then he whipped up his bony old nag to its best speed and hurried back to Kingston.

CHAPTER XXV.

SAM, A TRUE FRIEND.

Sam saw Jarrold get up and leave his table suddenly. The boy was on his feet in a minute and on his trail. Jarrold walked off quickly as if in a hurry. But Sam trailed him through the lobby. In front of the hotel stood an automobile, in the tonneau of which sat Jarrold's pretty niece.

Sam got behind a pillar of the Spanish portico and strained his ears to hear what the two were saying, as Jarrold paused with his foot on the running board. A chauffeur, who had apparently driven his car from some garage, stood beside it waiting respectfully.

The listening boy could not hear much. But he saw the girl clasp her hands as if pleading with her uncle not to do some contemplated act, and he heard Jarrold grate out harshly:

"Shut up, I tell you. What do you know about it?"

Then Jarrold turned to the chauffeur.

"You can go, my man. I'll drive myself," he said, and then he jumped in and drove off at a fast pace, while Sam stood helplessly on the portico. Jarrold had escaped his surveillance and it appeared, from the scrap of conversation that he had overheard, that mischief was in the wind.

Even had he had the money to hire another car, it would have been too late. Sam felt vaguely that he had been outgeneraled. He went back to the hotel to wait for his chum. But lunch time came, and no Jack.

Sam began to get worried. Still, Jack might have been detained on the ship. Partly to keep from worrying and partly to occupy his time, Sam set out to walk to the ship.

He found old Schultz, the quartermaster, superintending the getting out of the cargo.

"Seen Ready about, Schultz?" he asked, going up to the old man.

"Sure I seen idt him," was the reply.

"Where is he?"

"How shouldt I know? I vos busy votching dese plack peggars vurk. Aber, if I don'd vatch, dey all go py scheebs alretty. Yah."

"But he came to the ship some time ago."

"Ach! Don'd I know idt dot? Budt he leftd again, oh, an hour ago. Some fool call him up py delephones undt tell him he is vanted. Dot is pig lie. Nobotty vants him on der ship, so he go. Dot is all I know."

Sam looked dismayed. If Jack had left the ship to return to the hotel an hour before, then he should have reached there ages ago. He was not likely to linger, either, considering how anxious he was to observe Jarrold's movements. What could be the explanation? Was he hurt or injured, or was some plot in execution against him?

But Jack had no enemies in the world so far

as Sam knew, and certainly he had none in Kingston, where he was an utter stranger. Was it possible that Jarrold—but no, that sinister personage had been quietly seated at a table in the hotel garden till the time he drove off with his niece.

Feeling puzzled and depressed, Sam went ashore once more and called up the hospitals, in the belief that his chum might have been injured. But nobody even remotely resembling Jack had been seen there. Nor did his search in other quarters result any more favorably. At length Sam went back to the hotel in the vain hope that Jack might have been delayed in some way, and that they had passed each other.

But no trace of his chum did he find there, either. The lad made a miserable pretext of eating lunch and then set out on his search again. By this time he was absolutely certain that harm of some sort had come to Jack.

As he was leaving the hotel gates, he almost

collided with a figure just coming in. He greeted the newcomer with a cry of joy. In the mood he was in, Sam longed for someone in whom to confide his fears about Jack.

"Why, what is the matter?" demanded the other as Sam exclaimed,

"I am glad I met you. I'm in great trouble. It's about Jack. He left here to go to the ship. He was summoned there by telephone. But on his arrival at the dock, he found that the message was either a mistake or a wilful hoax."

"So?" said the aviator softly. "Go on, my young friend."

"That much I found out by inquiry at the ship after I tired of waiting for him to return."

"Yes, and then?"

Sam noticed something most peculiar about the aviator's manner, but he was in no mood just then to criticize it.

"Well, that's about all. He just hasn't shown up and I can't find any trace of him."

"That is more than strange," said De Garros in a serious voice, "when I tell you that I myself saw him not more than two hours ago."

"You saw him?"

"Yes."

"Where."

De Garros looked embarrassed. He laid a kindly hand on the shoulder of the anxious lad beside him.

"I hated to believe my own eyes and I hate to tell you what I saw," he said seriously, "but I saw your chum and my friend being helped out of a low dram shop in the negro quarter into a cab. He was—I hate to say it, but I must—tipsy."

Sam started back from the Frenchman with flaming cheeks and angry eyes.

"It's a lie, I don't care who says it!—It's a lie!" he burst out angrily.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A WICKED PLAN.

How Cummings came to be acting as the rascally Jarrold's agent is easily explained. After he was discharged from the *Tropic Queen* at Jack's behest, he had drifted about seeking any sort of a job. In this way he discovered that a yacht called the *Endymion* was being fitted out for a mysterious voyage.

There were several things about the *Endymion* and her crew that had prevented other wireless operators from accepting a berth on her.

No information was forthcoming as to the nature of her cruise or its destination or even who the owner was.

But Cummings was not particular. He met Jarrold on board and after an interview with the master rogue, in which he bound himself to ask

no questions but obey orders, he found himself signed on as the yacht's wireless man.

The *Endymion,* as we know, was a much faster boat than the *Tropic Queen,* and had arrived in Kingston, after her mysterious maneuvering on the voyage south, a day ahead of the liner, slipping in almost unnoticed and docking at a remote pier. As soon as the *Tropic Queen* docked, Jarrold, to whom alone these arrangements were known, hastened to the *Endymion.* He found Cummings and assigned to him the job of getting Jack Ready into his power. Cummings would have obeyed Jarrold anyhow, but the work given him held an added relish, for it afforded him an opportunity to take revenge on the lad whom he hated with a malicious envy.

As the auto sped along the road, passing few people and those, country negroes driving donkeys laden with produce for the Kingston market, Cummings related with great glee to Jarrold

the manner in which he had tricked Jack into taking the drugged drink.

"I'll take good care of you for putting the job through as you did," Jarrold assured the treacherous youth. "With that young meddler out of the way, I'll accomplish what I set out to do before the *Tropic Queen* reaches Panama."

"Do you still intend to transfer to the *Endymion* as soon as you have the papers in your possession?" asked Cummings.

"Yes. I shall signal you by the red flash."

"By the way, what happened to your apparatus the last time we exchanged signals?" asked Cummings, recalling the night that Jack played his memorable trick and cut off the current by which Jarrold was working his flash lamp.

"I don't know, but I suspect that young jackanapes back there of having something to do with it," was the reply.

"Well, you won't be bothered with him now," said Cummings.

"No; by the time he gets out of the Lion's Mouth the *Tropic Queen* will be far out at sea," chuckled Jarrold.

"How did you ever come to locate the Lion's Mouth, as you call it?" asked Cummings with some curiosity.

"Many years ago, when I was in Jamaica for —well, never mind what purpose—an old voodoo negro showed me the place. It forms part of the ruins of an old Spanish castle, and there is a legend that the old Don who once owned it kept lions in it for his amusement. Any one he didn't like, he'd let the lions make a meal of. Nice old gentleman, wasn't he?"

Cummings joined in Jarrold's laugh at his own grim humor.

The road began to grow rougher and Jarrold had all he could do to keep the machine in the track. He had no more opportunity to talk. Rocky walls shot up on one side of the thoroughfare, and on the other a steep precipice tumbled

sheer down to the sea, which broke in roaring masses of spray at its foot.

It was a scene of gloomy magnificence in which the modern car with its red trimmings and snorting engine seemed strangely out of place. At length they came to a spot where a ravine ran back from the sea, splitting the towering rock masses and spanned by a narrow bridge.

Jarrold turned the car aside and ran it some distance back into a track that wound along one side of the deep cleft, at the bottom of which the sea boiled and roared.

Cummings peered over somewhat fearfully into the dark depths.

"The sea pours into that ravine, and then at high water empties into a hole in the earth that penetrates nobody knows how deeply into the bowels of the island," said Jarrold.

"Has nobody ever explored it?" asked Cummings, unconsciously sinking his voice.

"Yes, some explorers fitted up a boat once and

announced that they were going to enter the ravine, and thence penetrate into the unexplored cavern where the waters disappear," was the reply.

"And what did they find?" asked Cummings.

"Well, they never came back to tell," rejoined Jarrold, with grim jocularity.

He brought the car to a sudden stop. A sheer wall of rock shot up before them. It was the end of the giant cleft in the earth. There were steps cut in the forbidding acclivity and on a platform far above were traces of ruined buildings.

"That's what is left of the old Don's castle, up there yonder," said Jarrold, pointing.

"And the Lion's Mouth is up there?" asked Cummings.

Jarrold nodded.

"That's the place," he said.

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN THE LION'S MOUTH.

Jack came to himself lying on a rocky couch. For a few moments his brain refused to work. He did not comprehend where he was or what had happened. He felt stiff and sore and his head ached intolerably.

Then memory came back with a rush. He recalled the darkened hut where he had drunk the supposedly innocent cola and then, but very vaguely, the sensation of being placed in a rig and experiencing a desire to call for help without being able to raise his voice.

But where was he now?

He looked about him. He lay at the bottom of a steep walled pit, apparently hewn by man or nature out of the solid rock. The walls shot up sheer and smooth to a height of at least thirty

feet. The bottom of this pit was about forty or fifty feet in circumference.

Beside him was a big canteen of water and some food. He noticed something around his shoulders, something that passed under his armpits. It was a rope about forty feet long. So, then, he had been lowered into this pit by somebody. But by whom?

His mind reverted to Cummings. Jack was tolerably certain now that he had been drugged by his crafty enemy, but he could not bring himself to believe that Cummings' mind had plotted the bold stroke by which he had been marooned in this pit. Some master wit had contrived that.

Jack's head swam as he began to sense the full horror of his situation. He did not even know how long he had been there. He looked at his watch. The hands pointed to three o'clock. He had wound the watch in the morning, so it was clear that it was the same day as the one on

which he had entered Mother Jenny's place with Cummings.

He rose dizzily to his feet and, steadying himself with one hand against the rock walls, looked about him with greater minuteness. Far above was the blue dome of the sky and at the top of those walls lay freedom. But he might as well have been in China for all the good it did him. He was cut off from his friends as effectually as if on the other side of the globe.

Naturally, too, he had not the slightest idea on what part of the island the pit was located. There was nothing to indicate where it was. Jack was not a lad who easily lost heart, but his present position was almost unbearable.

Unless rescuers came to his aid, and it seemed hardly likely that anyone could penetrate to such a place without a guide, he was doomed to a miserable death. He flung himself down on the rocky floor of the pit in an agony of despair. His despondency lasted for some minutes, and then,

resolutely pulling himself together, Jack sprang to his feet.

"I won't give up! I won't!" he said, gritting his teeth. "There must be some way out of this."

He took a pull at the canteen and ate some of the bread and meat. Then he began a systematic tour of exploration of his place of captivity. It was so nearly perfectly circular in form that he was sure that human hands had fashioned it.

In places in the walls were fastened iron rings that had mouldered away with the ages till they were as thin as wire. In ancient days, though Jack did not know it, the cruel old Don's victims were tied to these, to be devoured by the lions from which the pit took its name.

In one place a creeper hung temptingly down. But its extremity dangled fully four feet above the boy's head, and although Jack could have climbed on it to freedom had he been able to gain it, he knew that such a feat was out of the question.

All at once, though, he saw something that sent the blood of hope singing through his veins.

On the side of the pit opposite to that on which he found himself on his first awakening from his coma, was a big fissure in the wall. A ragged rent, it ran from top to bottom of the rock wall like a scar on a duelist's face.

It was apparently the work of an earthquake; perhaps the one that had devastated Kingston had caused it. At any rate, there it was, and to Jack, in his desperate condition, it offered a chance of escape.

True, for all he knew, he might, by entering it, be embarking upon worse perils than the ones he now faced, but at any rate it was an avenue to possible liberty and he determined to take full advantage of it.

In his pocket Jack had plenty of matches and the small electric torch that he used in making examinations of the more intricate parts of the wireless apparatus. He stuffed all the bread and

meat he could inside his coat, slung the canteen over his shoulder and was ready to start on an adventure that would end he knew not how, but which he had sternly made up his mind to attempt.

As a last thought he coiled up the rope by which he had been lowered into the pit and laid it over his arm. Then he plunged into the deep fissure. For some distance it was open to the sky above, but after some time it closed in and became a tunnel.

At this point, Jack hesitated. The darkness beyond appalled even his stout heart. He knew not what lay within, what perils might face him. For several moments he stood there hesitant; but finally he took heart of grace and, gripping his electric torch, plunged into the black mouth of the tunnel.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A CLIMB FOR LIFE.

The passage, for such it was, through which Jack was now advancing, was swept by a wind of such violence that at times it almost lifted the boy from his feet.

But this Jack regarded as a good omen. He knew that there must be some opening in this bore of nature's making to cause the great draught. He was glad he had his electric torch. No other light could have remained burning in the fierce gale.

The walls were of black rock, and the electric torch gleaming on them was flashed back in spangled radiance from some sort of ore it contained. In places, the tunnel contracted till it was only possible for the boy to progress by bending double. Again it broadened out till he could only touch the roof with his finger tips.

Suddenly he heard ahead of him a roaring sound like a water fall. Pressing on with a beating heart, lest he should find his further progress barred, Jack found himself facing a fair sized chamber, from the roof of which a cascade was falling. The boy guessed that he must be beneath the bed of some river and that the water was pouring into the cavern from a fissure in the rocky roof.

It was a beautiful sight, but he had no time to stop and admire it. He must push on. He left the cavern and the singing waterfall behind him, and once more battled with the mighty wind that swept through the bore.

The walls began to grow damp now and it was almost as cold as if a heavy frost had fallen. Jack shuddered and drew his coat close around him. He tried to calculate how far he had come, but the bore had made so many twistings and windings that he found it impossible to estimate.

His limbs felt tired and his eyes ached, but he kept on stubbornly.

"I've started this thing and I'm going to see it through," he said doggedly to himself.

And now the passage began to grow narrower. Jack felt the walls closing in on him as if with intent to crush out his life. The passage began to slope steeply and it was hard to keep a footing on the wet floor.

All at once the boy stumbled and slipped. He almost fell headlong, but recovered himself with an effort. In front of him he could hear a mighty roaring sound. The wind, too, was stronger and seemed damper than it had further back. It smelled as if impregnated with salt.

Jack gave another stumble on the uneven floor. This time he did not recover himself, but pitched headlong. And then——

He was in the water. It filled his ears, drowning all sounds. He rose to the surface battling

desperately, all senses dormant but the frantic desire to live.

He dashed the water from his eyes. He spat it from his mouth. It was salt and must come from the sea. Wave after wave swept toward him and under each of them he dived.

He soon realized that his fight for life was well-nigh hopeless, but he struggled as men will when death stares them in the face, for life is never sweeter than when it seems to be slipping from our grasp.

Weaker and weaker he felt himself growing. A sort of lethargy crept over him. He didn't care much longer. His limbs were numbed and chilled. The waves swept down on him, each gleefully following its predecessor, as if they were determined to end Jack's life in this cavern of the seas.

At last he felt himself uplifted on the crest of a gigantic comber and carried helplessly into the maw of that black gullet.

His outflung hand caught a projecting scrap of rock.
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"It's the end," he thought.

But still the instinct of life was strong in his battered body. His outflung hand caught a projecting scrap of rock in a drowning grip and clung there, despite the efforts of the wave to tear him loose. It was more blind instinct than human reason that sustained him as the wave swept on into the dark cavern, thundering against its sides like a train passing through a tunnel.

He found himself hanging to the side of a jagged crack that slanted across the rock high up on the side of the cavern. Into it he managed to jam himself, and then he hung there, too exhausted to move hand or foot, waiting for the next wave to tear him from his precarious hold.

How long he hung there he never knew. Wave after wave came racing by, reaching up watery fingers to tear him from his haven. But he had jammed himself too securely into the providential rift in the rock to be easily dislodged.

Hope began to dawn in his mind once more,

despite his position. He mentally cast up what had occurred since that disastrous tumble in the passage. It was plain enough that the bore in the rock opened on this cavern where the salt seas swept and raved. The cave, then, must be connected with the sea. Jack's reasoning was right. By an extraordinary chance, he was in the cave which Jarrold had told Cummings existed far under the ruins of the old Don's castle.

The boy had lost his rope and his electric torch and he was soaked through and through. But the canteen of water still hung round his neck. Safe for the time being, he began to cast about for some means of extricating himself from his position, but his heart sank as he realized the full hopelessness of his predicament.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FREEDOM ONCE MORE.

The necessity for action became imperative. If he stayed cramped and wet in that position much longer, there was grave danger that he would lose the power of locomotion altogether. He could not tell how far up the crack ascended, and, of course, since he had lost his torch he had no means of lighting up the gloom, for his matches, like the bread and meat with which he had stuffed his pockets, were soaked through.

He began to climb, moving painfully forward perhaps an inch at a time. For about fifteen feet he crawled, clinging with fingers and toes. It was heart-breaking work and anyone with a less stout heart than Jack Ready would have given it up and lain down to die where they were.

But Jack was made of sterner stuff. He

wormed his way forward, and found suddenly that the crack widened. Then he struck his head violently against the cavern roof.

The crack continued to widen, though, till it was possible for him to crawl into it. But the jagged edges of rock cut and tore his hands and face unmercifully.

Once within the crack, he lay still, panting. It hardly seemed worth while to go further, after all. Would it not be better to die there in the darkness without further effort? There was not the remotest probability that he was nearing a way out of the cavern, and to follow the crack further was labor lost.

Thus he meditated as he stretched himself out to rest. But when he had recovered his breath, love of life reasserted itself.

He would keep on. At any rate, one thing was certain: he could never get back now. Death lay behind him in all its grimness. Ahead, at least,

there was the unknown with a fighting chance—one chance in a thousand—in his favor.

Desperately, then, he struggled on, writhing between the narrow walls. He felt as if the whole weight of a mountain was upon him, crushing his ribs, driving the breath out of his body. The darkness was so dense that it could be felt enveloping him like a velvety pall of blackness.

Again and again he thought himself stuck fast, doomed to an eternal grave in the secret bowels of the earth. But every time he managed to wiggle through the tight place and gain another that was not quite so constricted.

But it was heart-breaking work at best. Then all at once the crack widened very noticeably. Cautiously he drew himself to his feet. He judged that he was standing on a shoulder or ledge of rock, but of course, in the inky darkness, he had no means of knowing.

It was at least good to be able to stand up and

feel no longer the crushing of the rock walls, like those of a living tomb.

After a little he began to move along, taking care, however, to keep close to the wall, for he did not know how wide the ledge, as he judged it, might be. For perhaps a hundred yards he progressed thus. Always before he took a step he reached out with one foot before him, fearing to encounter vacancy.

Suddenly he found he was on the edge of a void, and shrank back, clinging to the wall with the desperation of fear. It was some seconds before he dared to move again. He could feel the sweat rolling off him, the cold, pricking sweat of fright.

By a supreme effort he mastered himself. He found a loose bit of rock at his feet. Cautiously he cast it into the darkness in front of him. There was a long silence, and then, as if from miles away, came a tiny tinkle.

Jack shuddered.

He had narrowly escaped pitching head first into a bottomless abyss. He carefully retraced his way down the ledge. Suddenly his feeling fingers discovered another crack. This one ran vertically upward like a chimney, almost, at least so far as he could determine by the sense of touch.

A wild hope surged over him. This crack perhaps ran up to the surface of the earth! Recalling an old school-boy trick, he "spreadeagled" himself into the crack. He reached out his hands to either side of the "chimney" and lifted himself a little.

Then he wedged his toes in either side. Thus he painstakingly mounted, praying within himself that the walls of this natural shaft might not widen and make further progress impossible.

It was terribly slow work, though. Time and again he was on the point of giving up, but always the tough spirit of his indomitable old seafaring ancestors kept him at his task.

Foot by foot he toiled upward, till he estimated he had climbed some thirty feet. And then suddenly: Light! The blessed light of day! High above it was, but unmistakably the light of the outside world was streaming into this hideous subterranean chamber. It gleamed down into the shaft he was painfully ascending, shining like a blessed beacon of hope. It appeared to filter through some sort of net-work of greenery.

Wild with hope, he climbed on till at last he burst his way through a canopy of creepers and vines that obscured the mouth of the natural shaft. He clambered out beneath the blessed sky. As he fell exhausted, prone on the rocks, he heard a cry.

It was his own name!

But for the life of him he could not answer. He could only lie there without thought or motion.

CHAPTER XXX.

IN SEARCH FOR A CLEW.

The statement of De Garros concerning his chum struck Sam like a blow between the eyes. Of course he did not place the slightest belief in the Frenchman's words, but he was sorely puzzled and perplexed.

"Where was this place?" he demanded.

"If you will come with me, I will show you," said De Garros, linking the boy's arm in his own. "How sorry I am that I did not accompany him myself! But I thought, I sincerely thought, that he was in good hands."

"Who was this fellow that was with him," demanded Sam.

"I don't know. I didn't notice particularly. It was no one I had ever seen before."

"What did he look like?"

"As I told you, I did not pay him the attention that I should had I known things were going to turn out like this. He wore a big sun helmet, if that will afford you any clew."

They were walking through the streets now toward the hut of Mother Jenny.

Sam suddenly stopped short and struck his forehead with his hand, as if striving to recollect something. Then he shouted:

"Why, why, it was a young man with a sun helmet who was talking to Jarrold at the hotel this morning."

"So?" exclaimed the Frenchman. "Can this be more of that rascal's villainy? Has he got a finger in this?"

"I wouldn't put it past him," declared Sam vehemently. "He hates Jack, and with good cause from his point of view, for Jack checkmated several of his schemes."

"In Paris and again here, Jarrold," muttered De Garros to himself, as if recalling some latent

memory. "Some day, my friend, you will meet your reckoning."

"You knew Jarrold abroad?" asked Sam.

"I knew him, yes. I was his victim, almost—but let us talk no more of this. Let us hurry to the place where I last saw Jack Ready."

When they reached the hut with its palm thatch and untidy garden, Sam gave a gesture of disgust.

"And this is the place you saw Jack being helped out of?" he asked.

"It is, my friend."

"I cannot think that he would ever have come to such a hovel of his own free will."

"Possibly not. But you are confronted with the fact that he was here."

"That is true. Let us ask that old hag in the doorway what she knows."

They approached old Mother Jenny, who had hobbled to the doorway and stood watching them out of her bloodshot old eyes, puffing the while

reflectively at a home-made cigar, as if ruminating on what the strangers wanted.

"We came to inquire about two young men who were here this morning," began Sam.

The old woman's voice rose to a shrill scream.

"What I know 'bout dem, buckra?" (White man.) "Dey come. Dey drink de cola an' den dey pay and go. I know nothing mo'."

"She's lying," whispered De Garros to Sam.

"Who was the hackman who drove them away?" demanded Sam.

The old woman started, but swiftly recovered her composure, if such it could be called, and flourished her stick wildly.

"Tell you what, buckra," she yelled; "you go 'way. No bodder me no mo'. Me, Mother Jenny, 'spectable woman. Wha' yo' t'ink, buckra, yo' fren' come to harm by my place?"

"I didn't say so. I merely asked the name of the hackman who drove them away?"

Sam knew how important it was to keep his temper with the old crone.

"How much it wort' yo' fo' me to impart dat imflumation?" asked the old woman, leering hideously through a cloud of smoke she blew out of her wrinkled old lips.

"I'll pay you well for it," struck in De Garros, who had cabled for and received a large remittance. Poor Sam was almost "broke."

"Fi' dollar?"

De Garros nodded. The old hag stretched out a shriveled claw.

"Gib me de money, buckra," she croaked; "gib me de money here in dis hand."

"There you are," said De Garros with a gesture of disgust and annoyance.

The aged crone burst into a scream of wild laughter. She shook with mirth and then shrilled out in her high, cracked voice:

"He drove a brown horse, dat's all I know. Now go look fo' him yo' ownselves!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

LOOK FOR A WHITE HORSE!

It was useless to try to recover the money, and the two friends had to walk off minus five dollars and followed by the derisive laughter of the hag.

"At all events, she gave us one clew," said Sam hopefully; "the man drove a brown horse. We must look for every driver in Kingston with a brown horse."

"As it so happens," commented De Garros, "that is no clew at all, for I happened to notice that the equine in question was a white one."

"Better still. A white horse should be easier to run down than a brown one," declared Sam. "Hullo, there goes one now!"

They halted the driver, but he declared he knew nothing of the matter, having been out in the suburbs all the morning.

"Oh, well, there must be other white horses," said Sam, as the man drove off and they turned to take up the quest afresh.

"I believe, too, I'd remember the driver if I saw him again," said De Garros.

"Better and better. I'll bet we'll have good old Jack back with us before night," declared Sam hopefully. "At all events, we've got something to work on now."

"That's so," agreed De Garros. "But if we've got to interview every owner of a white horse in Kingston, we've got our work cut out for us."

"I don't care how hard I work, so long as we can find some trace of Jack," declared Sam positively.

An aged negro driving a dejected-looking white horse jogged by. The horse was plastered with dust till it was difficult to decide on what his real color might be.

Sam stopped De Garros by a tug at the arm.

"Stop that fellow," he said; "there's another white horse."

But oddly enough it was the darky who pulled up without any admonition to stop. He checked his aged beast and addressed De Garros.

" 'Pears ter me lak you am de party wot addressed dat young man wot was a-helpin' annudder gen'mun inter mah equipage dis mawnin'?" he said.

"That's right!" cried De Garros. "You're the man we've been looking high and low for. Where did you take him?"

" 'Bout five miles out down de Castle Road, Busha," said the old man.

"Five miles out down the road?"

"Yas, Busha, an' den dey takes him an' puts him in an awfulmobile and runs off wid him. Ah t'inks to myself dat ain' des right. When Ah gets back to town, Ah's goin' to hunt up dat gen'muns wot spoke to him dis mawnin' and acquaint him with de circumplexes."

"Great Scott! This is a clew, indeed. Do you know where they were going to take him?" choked out Sam.

"Yas, Busha. I hear dem say de Lion's Mouf."

"The Lion's Mouth!"

"Dat's right, massa. De Lion's Mouf ol' time name fo' a mighty big hole in de groun' out at ol' Don Pedro's Castle. Don' nobody hardly never go dar. White folks don' know 'bout it. Niggers all scared ob dere bein' a ghos'. Ah was dere once when Ah was lil' an' dat's all I know 'bout it."

De Garros, with the excitable nature of his race, was hopping about from foot to foot. As the old negro finished speaking, he burst out:

"Do you want to make some money?"

The old man's eyes popped out of his head. Here was another chance to make money. Things were coming his way. But he deemed it well to be prudent.

"Oh, as ter dat, I ain't particular. Ah'm right tired an'——"

"Put your horse in the stable and meet us here in half an hour. It will be worth your while. I want you to guide us to the Lion's Mouth."

"Berry well, Busha. Ah'll jes' put up ole Whitey, he's nigh tired out, an' Ah'll be right back."

"Good; hurry. Now, then, Sam——"

"Where are you going?" demanded Sam, carried off his feet by the volcanic activity of the young Frenchman. "What are you going to do now?"

"Get about a mile of rope and then charter the fastest auto they've got in this town," was the reply.

"Then you think——"

"I don't think, I know, that in revenge for his activities against him, Jarrold has tried to wreak a hideous vengeance on Jack."

"In the Lion's Mouth?"

"I don't know. I surmise so. But let's waste no time here in speculation. Get two hundred feet of the best manila rope you can buy. In the mean time I'll charter a car. Then we'll pick up old Black Strap and drive at top speed for the Lion's Mouth."

"Heaven grant we won't be too late!" exclaimed Sam, but the lively young aviator had darted off, leaving Sam dazed. Truly the climax had come quickly. Jack kidnapped, possibly drugged, and cast into a deep pit! Had it not been for Providence, they might never have heard of him again.

And so it came about that when Jack emerged from the mouth of "the chimney," not more than twenty yards from the rim of the Lion's Mouth, the first sounds that greeted him were the voices of his friends who had been peering, with blanched cheeks, into the profundities of the Lion's Mouth.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A BOLD ROBBERY.

It was the day following Jack's stirring adventure, which had left no more serious consequences to him than bruised hands and knees. He was sitting in the wireless room listening to the uproar outside. For the *Tropic Queen* was coaling, and the shouts of the negroes and the roar of the coal as it shot into the bunkers filled the air.

Sam was ashore and so was De Garros. They had gone to communicate with the authorities; but had found the Colonial police not much interested. Jack felt drowsy. It was getting late in the afternoon. Soon the swift tropic dusk would drop like a pall.

To keep awake, he decided to take a turn along the decks. He descended to the promenade deck and walked briskly up and down.

"Since we don't sail till to-morrow, I guess I'll go ashore this evening," he decided to himself. "It's too lonesome on board. Everybody's gone ashore for that big ball at the hotel to-night."

But he decided to wait for the return of Sam and De Garros before leaving. It grew dark, and they had not come back. Jack was about to scribble a note and leave it in the wireless room, explaining that he had tired of waiting and gone ashore, when a roughly dressed man brushed by.

It was too dark to see the fellow's face, but he appeared to be a sailor. Jack thought little more of the incident and went to his room to change his uniform for street garments. He was descending the stairs again to the main deck, bound for the gang-plank, when he was startled by a sudden sound.

It was the dull booming noise of an explosion, and it appeared to come from some place on board the ship.

For a minute or two he stood still, trying to

locate the sound. As he stood at pause, a figure darted from the purser's room. It was that of the roughly dressed sailor who had shoved past the boy a short time before. From the purser's room there rolled a dense cloud of smoke. It reeked of dynamite.

Jack flashed along the deck. There was a light inside the office of the ship's bookkeeper and cashier—which is what a purser amounts to, besides being a banker and money changer.

The boy saw in an instant what had happened.

The safe had been dynamited. Its door hung by one hinge. The air was full of smoke and the acrid reek of the explosive.

Jack knew that large sums of money and jewelry were frequently in the safe, and no doubt the bold thief had made off with an armful of loot. He wasted no more time investigating, but at top speed dashed for the gangway.

On the deck two big arc-lights shimmered whitely. Under their glare he saw a darting fig-

ure making for the shore end of the dock. He noticed that the man was heavily bearded and wore the rough clothes of a sea-faring man.

"Stop thief! Stop!" shouted the boy; but the man kept right on with his head down, clutching something that he had concealed in his loose sailor's blouse.

There was an old watchman at the gates of the dock. He put out a feeble arm to stop the marauder, but a terrific blow in the face knocked him off his feet.

The man darted on. Jack was close on his heels. They passed through the gate with only a few feet separating them.

A hack, apparently stationed there in preparation for the flight, was waiting. The black-bearded man leaped into it. But, by providential luck, another night-prowling rig came along at just that moment, its driver nodding sleepily.

As the first rig dashed off, rattling loudly over

the rough street, Jack leaped to the front seat of the second, beside the astonished driver.

He seized the reins from the man and brought down the whip on the horse's back with a crack that made the animal jump. It leaped forward with a jerk that seemed as if it would disrupt the crazy harness.

The man began to yell with dismay. But Jack quickly checked him.

"It's all right. You'll be well paid for this. That man in the hack ahead of us is a thief."

"Gelagoodness, Busha, I t'ink you was de thief, when you come leaping board mah cab de way you do."

The man was reassured by Jack's frankness, however, and they flew down the street at top speed after the other cab. The way lay along the deserted water-front, by coal docks, warehouses and gaunt traveling cranes. There were few lights and the road was rough and uneven.

The old hack jumped and bounced about like a ship at sea.

Suddenly something happened to the cab in front. One of its wheels caught in a rut as it was passing a dock. The wrench proved too much for the rickety old contraption, and the wheel went spinning off its snapped axle, while the black-bearded occupant was flung into the road like a stone from a catapult.

He lay still a moment while the driver of the wrecked vehicle in vain tried to stop his horse. Sagging to one side on its broken axle, the hack vanished in the distance with its runaway steed's legs working like piston rods.

Jack was out of the following rig in a flash. He rushed up to the black-bearded man's side just as the other rose to his feet.

It was not till that moment that Jack recollected that he had no weapon with him.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

JARROLD AGAIN.

By the light of an arc-lamp some distance off, Jack could catch the dangerous gleam in the black-bearded man's eyes. It was no time for half measures. The boy leaped straight at the other, who, entirely taken off his guard by the sudden onslaught, was borne backward and fell in a heap on the stones.

The negro who had driven Jack, scared out of his senses by the sight of the struggle, whipped up his horse and drove off. Jack was left alone with his antagonist, whom he soon found out was no despicable foe.

He struggled free from Jack's grip with the agility of an eel. He found his feet and reached back into his pocket. For an instant Jack thought the other was drawing a pistol. But it was a whistle that he produced.

He placed it to his lips. Jack, guessing that it was for the purpose of summoning aid that the thief was about to blow it, jumped forward to tear it from his grasp. But in his excitement instead of seizing the whistle he seized the man's beard.

It came off in his grasp and—James Jarrold, stood before him!

For a second Jack's astonishment was so great that he stood perfectly still, as if carved from stone. That atom of time was enough for the disclosed Jarrold. He blew two shrill blasts on the whistle. From somewhere they were answered. Down the dock came a swift pattering of feet.

At almost the same instant, Jarrold recognized Jack, as the boy's face, for the first time, came into the light.

"So it's you, is it?" he roared, with an oath. "You escaped from the Lion's Mouth! Well, there's no escape for you now. Here come my

men and this time I'll put you where you'll be out of harm's way for good."

At the same moment several men, among them Cummings, came running at top speed toward them.

Jack was no coward. But he was also no fool. There were six against him in that lonely part of the dock section of Kingston. If he stood his ground he would not have a chance. As Jarrold leaped toward him, he turned swiftly and darted off.

Bang!

Jarrold had drawn a pistol and was sending bullets after him. Up a dark alley Jack dodged, while behind him he could hear the rush of feet pursuing.

"Goodness, if they ever get me, it's all off!" gasped the boy.

He darted out of the alley he had been following, doubled up another and heard the rush of feet growing fainter. At last they died out alto-

gether. Apparently his pursuers had given up the chase.

Utterly winded, he leaned against a blank wall to recover his breath. He had no idea what part of the town he was in, but it appeared to be in the native quarter. From the opposite direction he heard men approaching.

By a street lamp he saw that they were two blacks. Both carried bundles. From their dress and walk they appeared to be stokers or firemen on some steamer. Jack stepped up to them and asked them the way to the hotel.

They stared at him a minute, and then one of them said:

"Lawd, boss, we dunno no mo' 'bout Kingston 'an you do. We's United States niggers, we is. Not dis Wes' Injun trash. We b'long on de *'Dimyun.*"

Jack gasped.

"On the *Endymion?*"

"Yes, boss, reckon dat am de name, come ter fink ob it."

"The *Endymion* is docked here, then?"

"She sho' is, boss, but she won' be long. We's got orders to git a wiggle on. She's gwine to sail right away. Come on, Jake, we ain't got no license ter be talkin' here. We's likely to miss de ship."

"One question more!" cried Jack, as the men hurried off. "When did the ship dock?"

"Night befo' de day befo' yisterday," said Jake.

"Do you know the name of her wireless operator?"

"Ah dunno. Fink it's Comein or suthin' lak dat. But see here, we all kain't answer no mo' question. Goo' night."

The two negroes hurried off, leaving Jack with swimming senses. So the *Endymion* was in the harbor! Had docked the night before the *Tropic Queen!* It was all plain enough now to the boy.

Cummings was her wireless man. That explained his connection with Jarrold. And the yacht was to sail that night, within a few minutes probably, and Jarrold, in disguise, had blown the *Tropic Queen's* safe open.

Jack's head buzzed. What was the key to it all? What had Jarrold blown the safe for just before he was hurrying to sea on his yacht in this clandestine fashion?

And then, like a bolt of lightning, the explanation struck him.

Colonel Minturn's papers had been placed in the safe while he was ashore!

Jarrold had taken a desperate chance and won out.

In half an hour's time he would be at sea beyond the possibility of pursuit, for the *Endymion* was far faster than any craft in the vicinity of Kingston.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

BAD NEWS FOR THE COLONEL.

The gardens of the hotel were brilliantly lighted, and the colored lamps, strung among the trees, glowed down on a gay throng, when into the midst of the merry-makers there burst an odd figure.

It was hatless, its white duck clothes were bedaubed with mud. Few would have recognized in this panting, wild-eyed apparition the usually natty Jack Ready.

But Jack it was. A waiter stretched out an arm to stop him as he dashed into the garden, but he shoved the man aside with a force that sent him spinning. Men and women stared at the boy as if he were a madman as he rushed about, searching frantically for Colonel Minturn.

He found him at last, chatting with a group of ladies and gentlemen.

Despite Jack's condition, the colonel recognized him at once.

"What, my boy, what has happened?" he exclaimed. "You look——"

"Never mind that now, Colonel, please," besought Jack. "I must speak to you alone at once."

"Certainly," said the military man, realizing that Jack must have some serious news. He excused himself to his friends and stepped aside, while Jack, in a swift, eager, low tone, told him what he feared had occurred.

"Colonel Minturn must have bad news," said one of the ladies of the gay party with which the colonel had been chatting. "Look, he's as white as a ghost!"

"That scare-crow messenger has brought him some news that has given him a shock evidently," commented one of the men.

But although Jack's message of the probable theft of the Panama papers had shaken the col-

onel to the fibers of his being, the long training of a military officer stood him in good stead at that crucial moment. By a supreme effort he steadied his nerves, and in the most casual voice in the world excused himself to his friends, saying that he would be back before long.

"I've a friend here who has a fast auto," he said to Jack, as the two thrust their way through the throng, who gaped at the spectacle of the distinguished-looking man in evening clothes and his disreputable appearing companion.

"We must get it and work quick," he went on, "there's a chance even yet that we can stop that yacht."

"If only I hadn't lost my way," said Jack, "we'd have saved a lot of precious time."

Colonel Minturn found his friend, and the auto with its chauffeur was willingly loaned. They jumped into the fast machine and were off, after Colonel Minturn had given directions to drive first to the ship. They found old Schultz

guarding the safe. The reek of the explosive was still heavy in the air.

Utterly regardless of his apparel, Colonel Minturn dived in among the blackened contents. There were packages of money, costly jewels and other valuables, but the most important contents of the safe—the papers which the colonel had hoped against hope might have been overlooked by the thief—were gone.

Despite his stoicism, the colonel could not restrain a groan.

"This means my ruin," he exclaimed. "We must get a boat of some kind at once and give chase."

"There's nothing in this harbor or south of New York that could touch the *Endymion* for speed," declared Jack bitterly. "There's only one chance in a thousand of stopping her! Oh, why didn't I think of that before?"

Before the colonel could stop him or ask explanations, the boy rushed off. He headed

straight for the wireless room. Sam was there with De Garros.

"What in the world——!" began Sam, as the disheveled, wild-eyed boy burst in. But Jack shoved his chum aside without a word and fairly threw himself at the wireless key.

He was calling the government quarantine station at the tip of Port Royal and the mouth of Kingston Harbor. There was just one way he could stop the *Endymion* and he meant to try it, forlorn hope that it was.

The spark flashed and roared and whined.

Other stations, those on ships far out at sea and along the coast of the island, broke wonderingly in as the volley of impatient calls went thundering out into the night.

The sweat poured from Jack's blackened face as he bent over the apparatus in the boiling heat of the tropic night, and worked the wireless as he had never worked it before.

At last he raised the operator at the quarantine station.

"We've shut up shop for the night. What is it?" inquired that individual, not best pleased at having his rest disturbed.

"You must stop the *Endymion,*" thundered the Hertzian waves; "stop her at all hazards, even if you have to notify the fort to fire upon her."

"The *Endymion?*"

"Yes; she has infectious disease on board. She must not leave the harbor."

There was a brief and portentous silence. In the hot, heavy stillness the boys could hear each other's deep breathing.

Then radio waves began to beat against Jack's stunned ears. "The *Endymion* with a clean bill of health passed out to sea half an hour ago."

CHAPTER XXXV.

JARROLD GETS FRANTIC.

Jack turned to find the colonel bending over him. Despite the military man's firm effort at self-control, his face was gray.

"Is there any hope?" he asked.

Jack shook his head.

"They've stolen a march on us, Colonel," he said. "The yacht had a clean bill of health, whether forged or not, I don't know. At any rate, her clearance papers must have been O. K. or she could not have sailed."

"Probably forged," said the colonel. "I must communicate with Washington at once."

"I can probably relay a message through," said Jack. "What do you want to say?"

"I will go to my cabin and write it in code," was the reply, and with stooping shoulders the

stricken colonel left the wireless room. After a short time he was back again with his code message. In the meantime, Sam and De Garros, under Jack's instructions, had notified the ship's officers, who were all ashore, of the looting of the safe, and an important conference, which Colonel Minturn joined, was held in Captain McDonald's cabin.

An examination by the purser showed that nothing except the papers, which had been in an inner drawer, had been taken, so that there was no object in alarming the passengers by notifying them of the robbery. The money and valuables were temporarily removed to another and older safe, and a screen placed about the damaged one to shield it from prying eyes.

Jack was summoned to the cabin to give his version of the affair and received warm commendation for the way he had acted. But the boy felt somehow—however causelessly—that he might have done more to prevent the robbery

and recover the papers. However, it was too late then.

He succeeded at last in getting a message through to the national capital, relaying to the immense radio station at Arlington. That message borne over the seas, caused more excitement in Washington than had any piece of news received there for many days. Cabinet officers were summoned for an extraordinary conference and every wire and tentacle of the secret service was set in motion.

Scout cruisers stationed off Mexico were ordered to scour the seas for the *Endymion* and capture Jarrold if they had to sink his yacht. The administration's message to Colonel Minturn was in code, but Jack guessed that it was a sharp reprimand couched in no very gentle terms. Uncle Sam is not harsh with his servants, but he does not tolerate mistakes, even though innocent and unavoidable.

The *Tropic Queen* sailed early next morning

while the naval wireless was still sending the far-flung message, "Find the *Endymion* and capture the man Jarrold." That simple message from Jack, tapped out by his agile finger-tips, had set the machinery of the war and navy departments buzzing as nothing short of a declaration of war could have done.

The possession of the complete plans of the fortification of the Panama Canal by Jarrold, meant only one thing. They would speedily pass into the hands of the foreign power of which he was agent. This meant that the power in question would have complete, triumphant knowledge of the most carefully guarded secrets of the mighty nation that built the great canal.

It would be necessary to squander money and time on remodeling the whole system of defense unless the *Endymion* could be found. That was the burden of the song the naval wireless men were flinging backward and forward with flaming keys that crackled and flared angrily.

"Find the *Endymion!* If she is on the Seven Seas, find her."

Over those who knew the secret agony that the army officer was suffering hung a heavy gloom, as the *Tropic Queen* ploughed her way seaward, bound for Santa Marta on the coast of Colombia. Colonel Minturn kept to his room, nursing his anxiety.

From time to time the naval wireless boomed messages in the secret code into Jack's ears and they were promptly transmitted below. But the colonel sent out no replies. All that he could say had been said in that first radiogram that had set official Washington a-buzz.

* * * * * * *

And in the meantime, on board the *Endymion,* what was happening? Speeding as if from a deadly plague, she was driven at top speed across the Caribbean. Jarrold, his face gray and lined, and almost as anxious-looking as the visage of Colonel Minturn, paced the deck and the bridge,

calling always for speed and more speed. His niece, pale-faced and nerve-racked, watched him anxiously.

Cummings, catching the naval messages that volleyed through the air, told of the hunt that was up; of the naval prows ploughing the tropic seas in a systematic hunt for the grayhound-like yacht that was fleeing like a criminal across the sea wastes.

Jarrold, under the strain, grew dangerous to approach. He kept shouting and signaling for speed and ever more speed. The engineer appealed to him in vain. It was dangerous. The boilers could carry no more steam. Already the ship was a-quiver with their imprisoned power.

But Jarrold had only one reply:

"More speed, I say, more speed!"

On the evening of the second day of this mad race, a murmur began to run through the ship: A rumor that Jarrold was a criminal. That he was fleeing from justice. That he would blow the

ship up with every soul on board rather than be captured.

The grimy crew of the stokehold, the "black watch," refused to face the trembling boilers any longer. They feared that at any moment the steel plates would yield under the terrific pressure and annihilate them and the ship. The chief engineer, unable to keep them at their work, even at the pistol's point, sought Jarrold, while the stokers spread a mutinous spirit throughout the yacht.

Jarrold was bending over a chart in the pilot house when the engineer found him.

"You are crawling like a snail," he snarled; "more speed."

"The men have quit," said the engineer quietly to the half-crazed man. "They are afraid to work below. The boilers may burst any moment."

"I don't care about that. We must reach the

coast before to-morrow morning. It must be done. My life hangs on it."

"I can't help that. The men won't work," protested the engineer; "they've thrown down their shovels and gone forward. I'd advise you to give in to them; they are in a dangerous mood."

Jarrold sprang to his feet with a snarl. He reached into a drawer and drew out a magazine revolver.

"The mutinous dogs! I'll drive them back to their fires with this," he rasped out, rushing from the bridge.

"Don't do anything rash," implored the engineer, who knew how things stood. "The rest of the crew are with them and we'll have a general mutiny on our hands if you precipitate trouble."

The only answer was a roar of rage from the hunted man, about whom Uncle Sam was weaving a fine-meshed wireless net.

He swung down the steps from the bridge to the main deck with the agility of an ape. The

captain, who also knew how matters stood, turned to the engineer and the mate.

"You fellows better get your guns," he said; "there's trouble coming now."

Suddenly the slender, graceful form of Jarrold's niece appeared on the bridge.

"Oh, what is it? What is the matter?" she implored.

"It's nothing, Miss Jarrold," began the captain, in a tone intended to pacify the half-hysterical girl. "You see——"

The sharp crack of a pistol shot cut him short. Following the shot, came a riot of savage cries and shouts.

The captain wasted no more words but, followed by his officers, all armed with revolvers, ran forward.

"That madman has spilled the fat now," he cried, as they rushed toward the forecastle. The sounds proceeding from it resembled the uproar from a den of wild beasts.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ADRIFT!

Cummings, like the rank coward that he was, had run for his cabin just behind the pilot house when the inferno broke loose. He was cowering in it with ashen cheeks when Miss Jarrold appeared in the doorway.

"Go away! Go away!" screamed Ralph, in an agony of fright. "The crew has mutinied. They'll kill us all. Oh, dear!"

"You coward!" said the girl, with flashing eyes, drawing her figure up to its full height. "Have you got a pistol?"

"Yes, there's one in the drawer there," stuttered Ralph.

With cool, firm hands, the girl took out the weapon.

"What are you going to do?" mewed Ralph fearfully.

"Help my uncle. You know what danger is on his track. Those men must go back to the furnaces."

"Oh, we'll all be killed," repeated Ralph tremulously; "or, if we're not killed, we'll be caught by a war ship. The air is full of messages about us. Scout cruisers from Vera Cruz, and war craft from other places are closing in all around us."

The girl bit her lip and turned a trifle pale.

"What are they saying?" she demanded.

"I can't tell. The messages are all in code, but I can catch the name of this yacht all the time."

The bulky figure of the captain suddenly appeared. The girl looked at him inquiringly. There was an expression on his bluff face that she could not fathom.

"Miss Jarrold, I have some unpleasant news for you," he said.

"Well, Captain, what is it?" she demanded haughtily.

The big seaman shifted from foot to foot uneasily.

"Your uncle has shot a fireman up in the forecastle," he said. "Oh, don't be alarmed; not dangerously, but the men are ugly. Your uncle, too, has confessed to me that there's a whole lot that is crooked about this cruise and I don't like it. The United States cruisers are after us, he says."

The girl bowed her head.

"So I believe. What of it? We have chartered this vessel and it is your duty to obey orders."

"I beg your pardon, Miss, that's what I was coming to. It's my duty to my owners not to get their craft in a position where it can be confiscated by the government. That is what will happen if we keep on running away. The situation amounts to this. The men have got your uncle captured and tied. They say they won't work the ship as long as he is on board unless he is made a prisoner."

The girl tapped her foot impatiently.

"Is that all the authority you have over them? Why don't you drive them to their posts?"

"Because I don't intend to, Miss. This cruise ain't regular; and I want this fellow here to send out a wireless message to the nearest battleship telling her our bearings and saying that we'll give up Mr. Jarrold."

"And if he refuses to accept?"

"We'll have to provision a boat and turn him loose in it. It's in the regular steamer lane here and he won't suffer much inconvenience. Somebody's bound to pick him up, and, anyhow, there are islands not far off."

The mate and the engineer appeared with Jarrold at this juncture. His hands were bound and his expression of rage was more like that of a wild beast than a man.

"I've already told Mr. Jarrold the men's terms and mine, Miss," said the captain. "Mr. Jarrold, sir, which is it to be?"

Jarrold looked like a trapped wolf. He glared at his niece and at his captors.

"You see, I can't lose my ship just because you've done something that seems to have stirred up the whole administration," said the captain diplomatically. "Personally, if you want to get away, I'd take to the boat. I can cook up a story about you and the young lady escaping one dark night, when we reach port."

Jarrold raged silently. The girl, white-lipped, erect and defiant, merely said: "Go on, please."

"You see we can't hope to get away. Every port we can touch at has a wireless plant of some sort. By this time the whole coast of the two Americas is on the lookout for us. And we can't keep on going without coal, and because of the crazy way we've been making steam, the bunkers are pretty nigh empty."

Jarrold nodded bitterly. The truth of the captain's arguments appeared to strike home on even his stubborn mind.

"You'll pledge your word to do no talking?" he said.

"Not a word, sir, and I'll answer for my officers, too."

"But the sailors?"

"Oh, they'll talk, but nobody believes a sailor's yarns, anyhow. I don't know what you've been doing, but it's clear that Uncle Sam wants you mighty bad. However, that's none of my business. My job is to save my ship from confiscation or being blowed up. So is it to be surrender by wireless or the boat?"

Jarrold glanced at his niece. She came to his side and stood there proudly.

"Let it be the boat," she said; and Jarrold nodded his head in silent assent. He seemed crushed and broken by the way in which fate had turned against him in the very hour of his triumph.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE IRONY OF FATE.

The *Tropic Queen* moved majestically through a sapphire sea. It was a perfect tropic night. A dream mist, like a scarf of shimmering, spangled vapor lay over the water. Above, the great, soft stars of the equatorial regions beamed from a sky like blue-black velvet. High above the main mast, like a great lamp, hung the full moon.

Disaster, danger and death seemed miles away, a contingency too remote to be considered. Yet they were close at hand, far closer than any of the sleeping passengers dreamed.

The bells chimed the hours and half hours as they slipped by to the steady threshing of the propeller, and the wake of the big ship spread fan-like from her stern in a milky stream that flashed with luminous phosphorescence.

Suddenly, from the lookout in the crow's nest came a shout sharp and clear.

"Something dead ahead, sir," was the reply to the inquiring hail from the bridge.

"Can you make it out?"

"Not yet, sir. It's two points on the starboard bow."

From the bridge night-glasses were leveled, but the eyes in the crow's nest made out the nature of the drifting object on the moonlit sea first.

"It's a boat, sir."

"A boat?"

"Aye, aye, sir. Looks like a ship's boat."

"Anybody aboard?"

"Can't just make out yet, sir."

And then a minute later:

"Yes, sir. I see somebody standing up and waving. It's—it's a woman, sir."

"Jove," exclaimed Mr. Metcalf, who had the watch. "Schultz, call the captain. Tell him

there's a boat with a woman castaway on board ahead of us."

"Aye, aye," cried the old quartermaster, and hurried off on the errand, leaving the wheel to his mate; for on such a night the ship could be steered almost by a boy.

The captain hastened to the bridge in his pajamas and bath-robe.

"A boat, eh, Metcalf?" he said.

"Yes, sir. A ship's boat, by the looks of her."

"Order the engines slowed down. Schultz, get the after cutter ready for clearing away."

The old quartermaster's whistle sang out shrilly, and the watch jumped aft, alert for anything that was in the wind. Like magic, word had flown among the crew of the discovery of the tiny derelict.

"The land's not more than two hundred miles off," said Metcalf. "It's possible they've drifted out to sea."

"Most probably that is it, unless some disaster

has overtaken a ship. At any rate, it couldn't have come from storm, for we haven't had any weather to speak of for days."

"By the way, sir, I heard a lot of talk before we left Kingston about earthquake weather. In my opinion, a quiet, still night like this means some sort of a shake. At least, that's what the natives say."

"Yes; and the glass has been singularly high. That's a sign of something in the wind," was the response. "But go aft, Metcalf, and see that they clear that boat properly."

"Yes, sir," and the chief officer hurried off.

He found Colonel Minturn, who had been pacing the deck sleeplessly in his anxiety, beside the boat crew, watching their preparations. Jack, whose watch had just expired, was there, too.

"Something up, eh?" asked the colonel.

"Yes; there's a drifting boat with a woman in it dead ahead. We're going to pick her up."

"I wonder if I could go along," said the colonel. "It would be something to relieve this anxiety.

It is terrible. I cannot sleep. All I can do is to walk the decks and think."

"I'll ask the captain," said Mr. Metcalf. "Personally, I have no objections."

He was soon back with the required permission.

"Ready, you're off duty and I know you like anything like adventure, so if you want to come, get aboard."

"Good!" exclaimed Jack. "Have you any idea what boat it is?"

"Not the least. That makes it all the more interesting. From what we can make out, though, it's a ship's boat of some sort."

The big vessel almost ceased to move. Her propeller, driven by the slowly working engines, only made a ripple on the water. The boat was swung over and struck the sea with a gentle splash.

"There they are, men. Give way with a will now," ordered Mr. Metcalf briskly.

The oars struck the water, sending serpents of phosphorescence over its dark surface. The boat moved swiftly forward toward the other craft, a small white gig apparently.

"There's the woman," cried Jack. "Look, she's standing up and waving!"

"There's a man there, too," cried Mr. Metcalf. "Pull hard, men, the poor devils may have been drifting for days."

"Hold on! We're coming," cried the colonel encouragingly, forgetting his own troubles in the sight of these two castaways of the sea.

The boats ranged alongside and the crew of the *Tropic Queen's* boat seized the gunwale of the other craft, holding them together. Jack stood up and extended his arm to the young woman to aid her on board the liner's boat.

The next instant a shock, sharp as the sudden sting of a galvanic battery, shook him.

The girl was Miss Jarrold! She recognized him at the same instant and gave a little cry.

Simultaneously Jarrold and Colonel Minturn came face to face. A hoarse cry broke from Jarrold's throat. He reached into an inside pocket and drew out a bundle, which he threw overboard before Minturn could catch his wrist in an iron grasp.

But as the papers splashed, and Jarrold broke out into a mocking laugh and cried, "You thought you had me beaten, but it's you that are beaten now, Colonel Minturn," there came another splash, a bigger one.

"It's the kid!" shouted one of the sailors. "He's gone after that bundle!"

Mr. Metcalf jumped from his seat to the assistance of Colonel Minturn, for Jarrold, maddened by the series of disasters that had overtaken him, had reached for and drawn a pistol. A crack over the wrist from an oar wielded by the first mate, sent the weapon flying overboard.

A few moments later Jarrold, who fought like a tiger, was lying bound in the bottom of the boat

with two sailors guarding him. His niece sat in the stern sheets sobbing hysterically over the ironic turn of fate that had caused the ship that they thought was to rescue them to be the very one they most dreaded.

Jack was hauled back on board after a few seconds' immersion. In one hand he held high a dripping bundle of papers. A sailor reached out to take them from him. But the boy refused to give them up.

"Only one man gets these," he said, shaking the water from his curly head, "and that is Colonel Minturn."

With a gasp of thankfulness that was almost a sob, the colonel took the papers from the boy's hands, thrust them within his coat and then fairly hauled Jack on board.

By a twist of fate, seemingly incredible, but really attributable to a logical chain of events, the papers relating to the priceless secrets of the Panama Canal were once more in the proper hands. They never left them again.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A BOLT FROM THE BLUE.

All the way back to the ship the girl sat silent, with bowed head buried in her slender white hands. Jarrold, tied and harmless, on the floor of the boat, raved and swore incoherently. Not till she stood once more on the deck of the *Tropic Queen,* however, did the girl give way. Then as she saw her uncle, sullen and defiant now, led to the captain's cabin where he was to be questioned, she reeled and would have fallen had not De Garros, who happened to be close at hand, caught her.

The sudden stopping of the ship had awakened most of the passengers and they had come on deck to see what was the matter.

"Here, take her below," said De Garros to a stewardess, as the passengers crowded curiously around.

The ship was once more got under way, the boat lashed home and the voyage resumed, while in the captain's cabin, facing Colonel Minturn, the wretched Jarrold told his story. But he expressed no sorrow, except for the failure of his mission. Captain McDonald ordered him confined in a cabin, to be turned over to the U. S. authorities when the ship reached Panama.

The sentence had hardly been executed, when a shuddering, jarring crash shook the ship.

Her way was checked abruptly and every plate and rivet in her steel fabric groaned.

Jack was thrown from his chair in the wireless room and hurled against a steel brace. He struck his head and fell unconscious to the floor.

For an instant following the shock, all was absolute silence. Then bedlam broke loose. Hoarse voices could be heard shouting orders, and the answering yells of the crew came roaring back. Women were screaming somewhere below,

and men passengers were trying in vain to quiet them.

Sam was hurled out of his bunk, and, rudely awakened, found Jack lying stunned on the floor. He dashed some water over him and then ran to the bridge. Captain McDonald, firm and inflexible, stood there giving orders as calmly as if nothing out of the ordinary had occurred.

"Shall I send out an S. O. S., sir?" asked Sam, striving to keep as cool as the ship's commander.

"Not yet. I have not a full report of the extent of the injury to the ship," was the reply. "First reports indicate that we have struck a submerged derelict."

But as Sam went back to the wireless room, he saw the boats' crews all standing by and every preparation being made for abandoning the ship. In an instinctive way, he felt that she had been mortally injured. She was still moving, but slowly, like a wounded thing dragging itself along.

The first officer came hurrying along the deck and shoved his head into the door.

"You had better try to raise any ship within our zone as fast as you can," he said.

"You are going to send the passengers off?" asked Sam.

"Yes, as a measure of precaution. The derelict we struck has torn a big hole in the engine room. It is impossible to say how long we can keep afloat."

He hurried off. Sam heard a groan and saw Jack rising on an elbow.

"What is it? What's up?" he asked bewilderedly, and then: "Oh, I remember now. Any orders for an S. O. S., Sam?"

"Not yet. But we're to raise any ship we can. They are sending the passengers off in the boats."

"Wow! That was a crack I got when she struck," said Jack, getting on his feet. "What did we hit, did you hear?"

"A submerged derelict. It has torn a big hole in the engine room."

Jack took the key from Sam and began pounding it. But an exclamation of dismay spread over his face as he did so.

"No juice!" he exclaimed. "Or not enough to amount to anything. Here's a fine fix."

Below them, as they stood facing each other, thunderstruck at this disaster, every light on the ship went out.

"Dynamos out of business," gasped Jack. He struck a match and lighted a lamp that hung in "gimbals" on the bulkhead.

They could hear the sharp staccato commands of the ship's officers as they quelled the incipient panic that had followed the extinguishing of the lights. The boats were being filled and sent away with quiet and orderly precision, a boatswain or a quartermaster in each one. The higher officers could not leave the ship till later, by the law of the sea.

Everything moved quietly, almost silently. It was like watching a dream picture, Jack thought afterward. Luckily, the moon was bright and gave ample light for the disembarking of the passengers. It was just this, the bright moonlight, the cloudless sky and the smooth, summery sea that made it all seem so unreal. It seemed impossible that a death blow had been dealt to a mighty liner and that her passengers were in peril, on a sea like a millpond and under an unruffled sky.

Jack hastened forward to report the failure of the current, without which not a message of appeal could be flung abroad. The captain received the news without the flicker of an eyelid.

"At any rate, the passengers are all safe," he said, "the boats are all off. Each has plenty of provisions and water and is in charge of a competent man. We are in for a long spell of fine weather and the coast is not far off. At the worst

it will be a sea adventure for them with few discomforts."

"Are you going to abandon the ship, sir?" asked Jack respectfully.

"No. My duty is to stay by her as long as I think there is a chance of saving her. The report from the engine room is that she can be run several miles yet before the water reaches the boilers. All the pumps are at work, full force, and that is the reason there is no power left for the dynamos."

"Do you mean you are going to try to beach her, sir?" inquired Jack.

"If I can possibly do so," was the reply. "There is an island not far to the south of here called Castle Island. If I can reach it in time and beach her, there may be one chance in a thousand of salving her, after all."

Jack had asked all the questions he dared. Had it not been a time of such stress, he would not have ventured to ask so many.

He hurried back to the wireless room. Sam was busy at the key, but he shook his head in reply to Jack's inquiring glance.

"Nothing doing," he said. "Any news forward?"

"Yes. All the passengers are off and there are now on board only the officers and crew. The skipper means to run for an island called Castle Island and beach her there. He thinks that later there may be a chance of getting her hull off, if he can make it."

"Then she is leaking fast?"

"Yes, they've got all the pumps going to keep the water from getting to the fires. That's the reason we've got no juice."

"Let's look up Castle Island," said Jack, partly to relieve the tenseness of their position as the wounded ship crawled strickenly southward and partly to keep Sam, who was making a plucky effort to fight back his fears, from thinking too much of their situation.

They soon found it—a small island shaped like a splash of gravy on a plate. It was marked with a red dot. Under this red dot, in italics, was written, *"Volcano. Probably extinct."*

"Well, any old port in a storm," remarked Jack, as he closed up the atlas.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

JACK'S RADIO.

Darkly violet under the light of the dawn-fading stars lay Castle Island. Cradled in the heaving seas it was watched by scores of anxious eyes on the *Tropic Queen,* now in her death struggle. The fire room crew was kept at work only by physical persuasion. The water was gaining fast now through the jagged wound in the craft's steel side.

In the soft radiance that precedes the first flush of a tropic dawn, the two young wireless men, their occupation gone, watched its notched skyline grow into more definite shape.

As the light grew stronger, they saw that it was a bigger island than they had supposed. Vast chasms rent the sides of rock-ribbed mountains, and the place looked desolate and barren to a de-

gree. Suddenly, too, Jack became aware of something they had not at first noticed.

From the summit of the rocky apex that topped the island, a smudge of smoke was blurred against the clear sky.

"The volcano!" exclaimed the boys in one breath.

"But I thought it was extinct," said Sam, in a dismayed voice. The thought of being in the proximity of an active volcano was anything but pleasing to him.

"Extinct volcanoes smoke sometimes," said Jack. "I've read of several in Mexico that do."

On the bridge, gray-faced from their long vigil, the ship's officers clustered about Captain McDonald, watched with anxiety the growing outlines of the island.

"There are shoals of sand off to the southeast there," said the captain. "I was here years ago when I was an apprentice on the old *Abner A.*

Jennings. If we can reach them the old ship will lie easy unless bad weather comes on."

The steamer crept slowly forward. She hardly seemed to move, in the minds of the impatient souls on board her. But at last the water began to show green under her bows, signifying that she was getting into shoal waters. On and on she crawled, till she was a scant quarter of a mile from the mantling cliffs.

It was then that Captain McDonald sent word below to let the stokers come on deck. It was none too soon. The men were working at pistol point with water up to their waists, when the word came to evacuate the stokehold. Even fire-arms could not have kept them in that water-filled black pit much longer.

The engines were left running and a short time later, like a tired child, the *Tropic Queen* cradled herself in a bed of soft sand and her voyage was over. An impressive silence hung over the ship as she grounded, which was not broken till the

sharp orders that preceded her abandonment were issued.

Then all was bustle. The two remaining boats were lowered and the men sent ashore. At last all that were left on board were the officers and the two wireless boys. The men had carried ashore provisions and canvas for tents, and a stream of water that the first arrivals reported near the landing place, showed them that there was no danger of their going thirsty.

It was just as Jack and Sam were preparing to get aboard the boat that a strange thing happened. The tall, slender form of a young woman appeared on deck. It was Miss Jarrold. An instant later De Garros joined her.

"Why, I thought you were on board the other boats!" exclaimed Captain McDonald, fairly startled out of his stoic calm.

"Like myself, Mr. De Garros elected to see this thing out," chimed in another voice, and there was Colonel Minturn.

"So we stayed below while the other passengers were being taken off," said the young aviator, "knowing that if there was any real danger we would still be able to escape. A shipwreck was too exciting an experience to miss."

"Well, if you want to make two fools of yourselves, I can't stop you," said the captain, in slightly nettled tones. "But this young lady. What is she doing here?"

"Inasmuch as my uncle is a prisoner on this ship, it was my duty to stand by him," said the girl, firmly compressing her lips.

"But I specifically ordered that Mr. Jarrold be taken off in one of the boats," said the captain, in a bewildered tone.

"Then whoever you gave the orders to disregarded them," replied the girl calmly. Then quite in a matter-of-fact voice she added, "Are we going to camp on that island?"

"Till help comes, yes," replied the captain. "I will see that you have a tent and are made as

comfortable as possible, but of course you can't expect luxuries."

An hour later they were all on shore. Captain McDonald made an address to the men, who were quiet and orderly, telling them that the discipline in the shore camp would be the same as on board the ship, and that later on a consultation would be held and the best means of getting assistance decided upon. They had two boats and it was likely that Mr. Metcalf, in one of them, might be sent to the mainland in quest of aid.

Castle Island was a dismal-looking spot, but the boys decided to make the best of a bad business and set out, after a mid-day meal of canned provisions, coffee and crackers, for a walk along the beach. They didn't find much of interest, however. In fact they could hardly keep their eyes off the *Tropic Queen,* lying on the shoals helpless with smokeless funnels, and listed heavily to port.

It was on the way back to camp that an odd

thing happened. Sam was walking slightly in advance. Suddenly he turned around on Jack: "Say, what are you doing?" he demanded. "Don't shove me."

"I didn't shove you," said Jack. "I felt the same thing. I—— Gracious, it's the earth shaking!"

"Look, look at the volcano!" cried Sam suddenly.

Jack looked up at the towering, gaunt crest miles away, rearing to an infinite height above them. An immense cloud of yellow, sulphurous smoke, muddying the blue of the sky, was pouring from it.

The earth shook again sickeningly. White-faced, the boys hastened back to camp. They found Captain McDonald and the other men trying to quiet the fears of the crew, who fully believed that before night the volcano would be in eruption, burying them, maybe, in lava. They

succeeded fairly well, but the men kept their eyes turned to the smoking crest almost ceaselessly.

Miss Jarrold sat apart in front of her tent with her uncle, whose bonds had been taken off.

The day wore on and the tremors were repeated from time to time. But nothing serious occurred. In fact, the marooned party began to grow used to the shocks. It was arranged that early in the morning, Mr. Metcalf, with one of the boats and a picked crew, was to set out for the mainland and summon help.

During the afternoon, to fend off his melancholy thoughts, Jack decided to write down all that had happened since the eventful voyage of the lost liner started. He begged some paper from the purser, who gave him a stack of duplicate manifests. He sat himself down, pencil in hand, and was beginning to scribble, when he suddenly stopped short and sat staring at a sheet of paper that had fallen to the ground beside him.

His eyes were centered on an entry at the top

of the page. There didn't appear to be much about the entry to cause Jack's pulses to throb with a wild hope and his heart to beat quicker, but they did. Here is what he read:

"To Don Jose de Ramon, Electric Supplies, Santa Marta. 10 storage batteries from Day, Martin & Co., New York."

Storage batteries!

Jack threw aside his writing and made for the purser.

"Where are those storage batteries for Santa Marta stored?" he asked.

"In hold Number One," was the reply. "They are on the top of the Santa Marta cargo."

"Can they be got at easily?" asked Jack.

"They are among the 'fragile' goods," was the reply, "on the port side of the hold. They were to be the first things ashore at Santa Marta. But why do you want to know?"

"Oh, there's a reason, as the ads. say," laughed Jack.

That afternoon the two young wireless men spent in long and anxious consultation. Dark came, and from the volcano a lurid glare lit the sky, yet no heavy convulsions of the earth occurred. Supper was over and the sailors, after desperately trying to keep up their spirits by singing, turned in. Soon the whole camp was wrapped in silence. The only ones awake were Jack and Sam.

Silently, on the soft sand, the two lads crept from the camp. Around their waists they wore life belts taken from the boats, which lay on the sand where they had been pulled up. The inspiration that had come to Jack when he read that entry on the manifest, was about to be put to the test.

"You are sure you can swim it, Sam?" asked the boy as the two lads waded into the water with

their eyes fixed on the black hull of the stranded steamer.

"With this life jacket on I could swim round the Horn," declared Sam confidently.

"All right, then, here goes." Jack struck off into deep water, followed by Sam.

The water was almost warm and quite buoyant. It was a real pleasure swimming through it in the moonlight, while at every stroke the phosphorescence rippled glowingly from their arms and legs. They reached the ship almost before they knew it, and swam around her till they found the Jacob's ladder by which the descent to the boats had been made. They scrambled up this with the agility of monkeys, and then made their way along the steeply sloping decks till they reached the wireless room with its silent instruments. Everything there was in perfect order, except for "juice" that was needed to wake them to life. And this Jack intended to have in short order.

Working under his directions, Sam broke into

the storeroom where such supplies were kept by the ship's electricians, and got two huge coils of insulated wire. Carrying these, he followed Jack, who bore a lantern, to Number One hold. It had been broken open at Kingston and the battens had only been loosely replaced for the run to Santa Marta, so that it was an easy matter to gain access to the hold.

Down the steep iron ladder they climbed till they stood among high-piled boxes and bales. Jack flashed his lantern about and at last uttered a cry of triumph.

"There they are," he cried, pointing to some big boxes labeled, "Jose de Ramon, Santa Marta."

"Now for the test," chimed in Sam.

The boys attacked the cases vigorously with hatchets they had brought with them, and soon had the ten powerful storage batteries exposed.

"Now get to work, Sam," said Jack, producing some pliers and seizing hold of a coil of wire.

CHAPTER XL.

THE ANSWER TO THE WIRELESS CALL.

Most of my readers have, in all probability, by this time guessed Jack's plan. It was nothing more nor less than to harness up the powerful storage batteries to the wireless apparatus, and thus secure a wave that, while not as strong as the one from the ship's dynamos, would yet reach for two hundred miles or more.

This was the inspiration that had come to him when his eye had fallen on the momentous entry on the manifest. The boys worked feverishly. At last the batteries were connected, and it only remained to run the wires to the instruments in the wireless room. Then would come the supreme test.

At last everything was "hooked up" to Jack's satisfaction, and he sat himself down at the key.

He knew that his wave lengths would not be very heavy nor his radius large, but he calculated on the fact that already this part of the ocean was alive with scout cruisers and warships hunting for the *Endymion*.

With a beating heart and a choking sensation in his throat, he seized the key. Sam could not speak for excitement and suspense, but leaned breathlessly over his chum's shoulder.

Downward Jack pressed the key.

A simultaneous shout burst from both boys' throats. The wireless was alive once more!

A green spark, like an emerald serpent, leaped from point to point of the sender. With swift, practiced fingers Jack began sending abroad the message of disaster and the appeal for rescue.

Almost the entire night passed away without any answer reaching his ears, although he ran the gamut of the wireless tuning board. He began to fear that the current was too weak to reach any of the ships that he knew were scouring

the sea for the *Endymion,* when suddenly, in response to his S. O. S., came a sharp, powerful:

"Yes—Yes—Yes."

"Oh, glory!" cried Jack. "I've got a battleship! I know it by the sending."

"This is the *Tropic Queen,*" he flashed out. "We are wrecked on Castle Island. Send help quickly. Rush aid. We are——"

A loud, terrified cry from Sam interrupted him. Through the door the whole sky could be seen a flaming, lurid red. The stranded ship shook as if in the grip of cruel giant hands. The boys were thrown helter skelter about the sloping cabin floor.

The place gleamed with the glaring, crimson light. A dreadful roaring sound filled their ears. The sands beneath them appeared to heave up and down in sickening waves like those of the unquiet sea.

Then came a vast uproar, and the two terror-stricken boys clawed their way out on the slant-

ing deck. They looked toward the island. The sky above it was blood red. The rugged sky-line of its peaks stood out blackly against the scarlet glare. The air was full of a gas that burned the throat and choked the lungs.

"It's the volcano!" cried Jack. "The volcano! Look!"

But Sam was clutching the other's arm and pointing frantically seaward. Rolling toward them, its foaming head crimsoned by the lambent glare of the volcano, was a giant wave.

"Into the wireless room. Quick! For your life!" screamed Jack.

They scrambled up the sloping deck and threw themselves flat on their faces in the coop, clinging to stanchions with a death-like grip. The next instant there was a roar like a thousand Niagaras. They felt the solid fabric of the *Tropic Queen* lifted dizzily skyward, while tons of water roared down on her. Then there came a sickening crash that shook the boys loose from

their grips and sent them rolling about the cabin. The door was burst open and they staggered out on the deck. The *Tropic Queen* was almost upright now, with her bottom smashed in till she stood flat upon her bare ribs in the soft sand.

Jack could see, by the glare of the burning mountain, the bleak figures of men far up among the rocks. The tidal wave, then, had been seen in time for some of them, at least, to save themselves. He had just time to observe this when before his eyes the sea sucked outward—outward—outward. The ocean floor rose into view, all crimsoned from the flaming volcano. He could see gaunt rocks uncovered for the first time since the creation, perhaps, sticking up blackly in the slimy depths.

And then the sea came back! Out in the far distance across the exposed flats a mighty wave shouldered itself. Its body and huge hollow incurve was black, but its crest was glowing with

reflected flame. Jack gave one glance ashore. He could see black figures scuttling high up the rocks.

They had just time to rush into the wireless room, with its steel walls and stout foundations bolted to the iron superstructure, when, with a roar, the mighty wave swept landward. Jack and Sam felt the *Tropic Queen* lifted and rushed toward the shore, then lifted again and again and again till it seemed impossible that anything man-made could resist the awful force.

But at last the ship grounded with a shuddering, sidewise motion that seemed like a last expiring gasp. The boys ventured forth. The ship was lying on the beach almost at the foot of the cliffs. Her funnels and masts had vanished, snapped off like pipe stems. She lay a sheer, miserable hulk in the flaring light of the volcano.

Seaward, the waves were breaking tumultuously, but the tidal wave had spent its fury.

Dizzy, sick and battered the boys made their way over the side of the lost liner and crept up the beach. It was littered with the smashed fragments of the two boats and the remnants of the hastily abandoned camp.

Through the glowing darkness a figure came toward them.

"Great heavens, boys, is it you?" they heard.

"Yes, Captain," rejoined Jack. "We've come ashore."

"Thank Heaven you are safe! We are all right except for four poor sailors who did not awaken in time. But where have you been? How did you get on board?"

"We swam out," said Jack simply, "and had just got out a wireless call when the big blow-up came."

"A wireless call! Are you out of your head, boy?"

"By no means," said Jack. "We got out a

call, and, better still, got an answer. I don't know what ship it was, but it was a naval craft. I gave our position and then came the tidal wave."

"It is our only chance," said the captain. "Both boats were, of course, smashed, and we are marooned till aid comes."

* * * * * * *

It was the next night. The disconsolate castaways were huddled near the pathetic wreck of the lost liner. Food had been obtained from on board, so that there was no actual suffering, but the volcano still glared and rumbled and at any moment a disastrous eruption was to be feared.

De Garros and Miss Jarrold stood together apart from the rest.

"And your uncle's influence over you is broken forever if we ever escape from this?" he was asking.

She nodded.

"That time in Paris when he tried to persuade you to give up the aeronautical plans was when I first began to mistrust him. I never thought I should see you again after our engagement was broken off, but fate has brought us together. It has been like a dream," she went on. "I think sometimes that he exercised a hypnotic influence over me. But I know it all now and can see things clearly."

De Garros was about to answer, when suddenly his body stiffened. He pointed to the northern horizon.

"There," he cried. "Look there!"

His excitement was mounting high.

"See," he shouted, "that white light! It's sweeping the sky! What is it?"

Far off, a faint pencil of light swung across the zenith as if on a pivot. It dipped to the horizon, rose again and swung like a radiant pendulum across the sky.

"Signals," the girl choked out. "It's a searchlight!"

From the seamen there came a hoarse cheer.

"It's a battleship! She's signaling!" shouted Jack in a voice that shook. "It's Morse!"

He took a long breath or two. Then he choked out the message that was flung on the sky.

"Courage! We are coming!"

And then pandemonium broke loose. Under the glaring sky, seamen danced and shouted and the other members of the party shook hands. Only Jarrold stood silent and aloof, looking at his niece and De Garros. It was as if he knew that his hold over her was broken forever, and that the approaching warships, speeding to the rescue, meant for him shackles and iron bars.

* * * * * * *

The scene shifts to Colon harbor. Into port are steaming the *Birmingham,* scout cruiser, and the *Wasp,* torpedo destroyer, the craft that rescued the castaways of Castle Island. Already by

wireless the story of the lost liner and the wonderful resourcefulness of Jack Ready and Sam Smalley has gone out to the world. Big crowds are waiting to meet the rescuing warships. Among them are the military attachés to whom Colonel Minturn, thanks to Jack, will be able to hand the Panama documents so nearly lost forever.

At the stern of the *Wasp,* under the ensign, are standing Jarrold's niece and De Garros. He is telling her that Colonel Minturn has promised to intercede for her uncle, and that in all probability he will be deported with a warning never to tread American soil again, in place of being imprisoned. Nations do not care to advertise their troubles with international spies, if it can be avoided.

Jack and Sam, on board the *Birmingham,* stand happily by the wireless operator of the cruiser. He is taking a message. Presently he turns to them.

"Some news that will interest you, fellows," he says. "All the boats from the *Tropic Queen* have been picked up, without the loss of a single passenger."

"Good work!" exclaim the two listeners heartily.

"And the *Endymion,*" continues the operator, "has been in port for a week, and her crew and captain are detained pending an inquiry."

"Well, I guess they'll get out of the scrape, all right," says Jack, "for they didn't know what schemes Jarrold was up to when he chartered the yacht."

"What about Cummings?" asks Sam.

"So far as I am concerned, I shall take no action," replies Jack. "All that I am anxious for now is for a sight of the good old U. S. A. and Uncle Toby and——"

"Somebody named Helen," chuckles Sam, while Jack turns red under his tan.

And here, with their adventures on the lost liner at an end, we will say farewell to our ocean wireless boys till we encounter them again in a forthcoming volume dealing with their further stirring adventures at the radio key.

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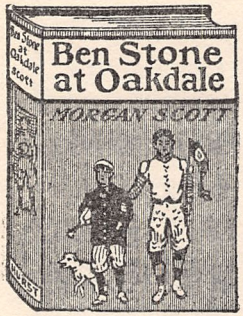

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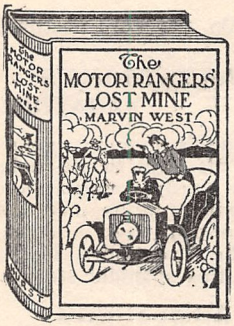

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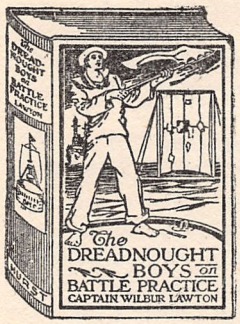

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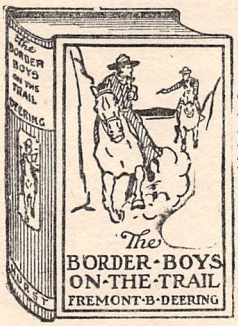

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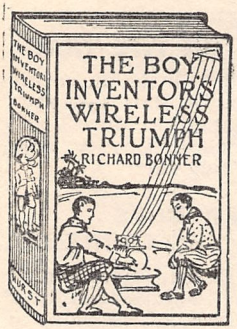

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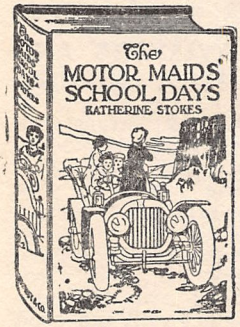

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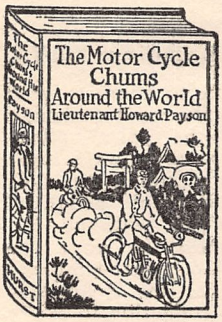

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